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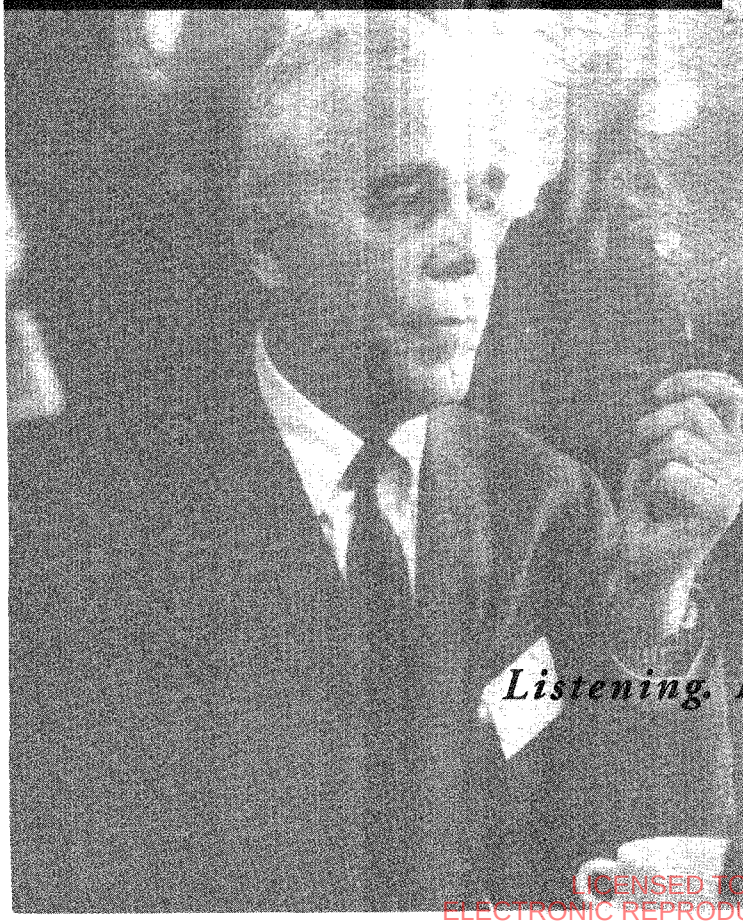

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CORRESPONDENCE

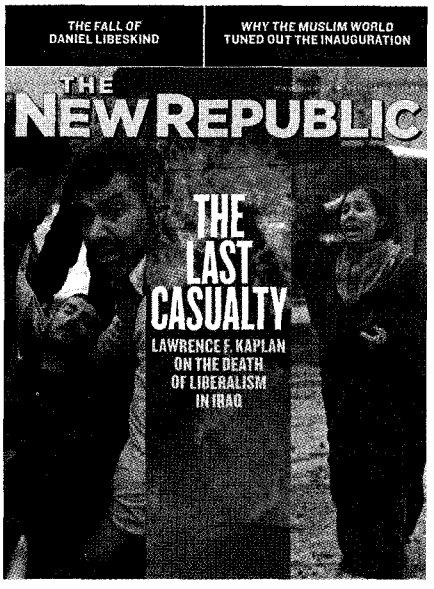
GOLDEN PROPORTION

TWO PIECES IN THE FEBRUARY 7 issue show a lack of understanding of proportional representation (P.R.), as used in Iraq's elections ("Party Foul" and "The Last Casualty"). First, Annia Ciezadlo takes at face value Kurdish leaders' own justification for presenting a single slate—that it was Kurds' "patriotic duty to . . . avoid splitting the Kurdish vote." But, in a nationwide P.R. system, two lists getting, say, 12 percent and 8 percent of the vote will get the same number of seats as a unified list getting 20 percent. Second, Lawrence F. Kaplan believes that liberals would have fared better under a system of U.S.-style "individual districts." He even asks, rhetorically, how Ronnie Eldridge or Carol Schwartz would fare in U.S. national elections. The answer is quite well, as members of a party list that could combine the votes of like-minded citizens everywhere, even from areas where the majority is hostile to their views. Individual districts, on the other hand, ensure that only the strongest *local* candidates prevail. In Iraq, for every district in which a locally known liberal might win, there are a dozen or more where the winner would be the candidate sponsored by the local cleric or tribal leader. Kaplan is right that P.R. favors recognized parties over individuals, but only proportional representation will give minorities like Iraq's liberals a chance to be represented as a political force.

MATTHEW SHUGART
La Jolla, California

KURDS' WAY

IN HER DISPATCH FROM SULAYMANIYA, Annia Ciezadlo makes some questionable claims. First, Ciezadlo criticizes the two major Kurdish parties for joining together to run a common Kurdish slate for the national elections. But the Iraqi election was not like the recent U.S. election. The Iraqi Transitional National Assembly will write Iraq's permanent constitution. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reverse 84 years of discrimination and suffering. Unity is vital. Second, Ciezadlo claims that Iraqi Kurdistan is not a "thriving democracy." In fact, we agree; much remains to be done, and the contested provincial assembly elections are



part of the process of democratization. Third, Ciezadlo claims that the Kurdish parties "cracked down on the referendum movement, banning more mass demonstrations." This is false. There were two suicide terrorist attacks in Erbil on February 1, 2004, which killed 109 people. The Kurdish authorities told the referendum movement that they could not assure security for the March 2004 demonstration. They were right. On March 2, 2004, suicide bombers killed close to 200 people in Baghdad and Karbala. A few days later, the Kurdish authorities confiscated ten suicide vests with explosives. Still, there was a mass demonstration by the referendum movement on October 2, 2004, which drew 100,000.

Finally, Ciezadlo, not content with the gratuitous insult of comparing a Kurdish leader to Saddam Hussein, says that Iraqi Kurdistan "resembles a Soviet satellite state" in which "intelligence agents lurk everywhere." In support of this claim, she quotes leaders of less-known Kurdish parties running independently on local ballots, political analysts, newspaper editors, a talk-show host who publicly questions the political system, and a young voter. No "Soviet satellite state" ever had such diversity of opinion or independent civil society.

JUSTYNA BARTKIEWICZ
Special Assistant for Research and Public Diplomacy
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
Washington, D.C.

ANNIA CIEZADLO RESPONDS:
I don't consider the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations of the Kurdish people "questionable." It was a Kurd—not just me—who compared Kurdish leaders to Saddam. In Kurdistan, people often compare the two ruling parties to the Baath. But, despite what you call an "independent civil society," they don't feel free to commit such statements to print—which is exactly why I included it in my story. Canceling a demonstration immediately after a suicide bombing is justified. Canceling it for seven months is not. I find it hard to believe that Kurdistan's regional government was unable to provide security for seven months, especially in a region that, as Kurdish officials constantly remind us, is by far the safest in Iraq. The argument that the government couldn't provide security for an embarrassing demonstration is a familiar one: The Lebanese government tried to use it, unsuccessfully, to shut down anti-Syria demonstrations in downtown Beirut recently. And I don't see how the March 2 suicide bombings, on the Shia holiday of Ashura, prove the point. Was the Kurdish referendum movement planning to demonstrate at Shia mosques in Baghdad and Karbala? These bombings were specifically planned to target Shia, not Kurds, in a different part of the country.

MEMENTO ME

I HOPE THAT RUTH FRANKLIN WILL visit Daniel Libeskind's monstrosity of an art museum in Denver and extend her essay on monumental egotism ("Mr. Memory," February 7). It will be bollocks.

TERRY GULLIVER
Denver, Colorado

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Outer Limits

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

AMONG THE MOST JARRING statistics from last fall's election is John Kerry's 23-point deficit among white, working-class voters. For several months now, liberals have blamed this on Kerry's timid economic message. And, for several months now, the many other explanations for why working-class voters might distrust Kerry—from national security to his Brahmin vacation habits—have made this economic argument easy to ignore. But, last month, polling expert Ruy Teixeira stumbled onto a data point that made the liberal case far more compelling: Working-class whites not only preferred George W. Bush overall, they also favored him by a 16-point margin *on the economy*. Surely that vindicates the economic populists, doesn't it?

Actually, no. The biggest reason Democrats' economic appeals to white, working-class voters fell flat *isn't* that they weren't passionate enough. It's that Democrats have run up against the limits of what they—or anyone else—can do to create and protect good jobs, the top economic priority of working-class voters. And the political implications of that development are enormous.

The best way to see that employment is the sine qua non of economic well-being is to look at the relationship between jobs and other issues like health care, taxes, and education. When jobs are plentiful, voters have the luxury of worrying about these secondary economic concerns; when jobs are scarce, employment overwhelms all other priorities. For example, with record low unemployment in the summer of 2000, only 3 percent of Americans told Gallup their top concern was jobs. But, in August 2003, after two years of job loss and stagnant wages, 17 percent of Gallup respondents ranked unemployment/jobs as their top concern, versus 5 percent or less for health care, the budget, or education.

After World War II, Democrats benefited from a politically potent syllogism: Membership in a labor union could guarantee workers a stable, high-paying job; Democrats were the party of labor; therefore, a vote for Democrats was a vote for a high-paying job. But, as my colleague John B. Judis recently wrote, that arrangement broke down amid increasing globalization in the 1970s ("Structural Flaw," February 28). Thanks to rising global production capacity and the prevalence of cheap foreign labor, real hourly wages fell slightly between the '70s and the late '90s. About one-quarter of U.S. manufacturing jobs migrated overseas during the last 25 years.

As Harold Meyerson, *The Washington Post*'s resident (and uncannily astute) laborite suggests, Democrats have to reverse these trends if they want their economic agenda to become the trump card it once was. Unfortunately, this may not be possible. One approach might be government policy—say, slowing the pace of trade liberalization. But, at best, that would only delay the hollowing out of the U.S. manufacturing sector, not stop it. The textile industry is one of the most protected in the country. Yet, over the last decade, it has been hardest hit by international competition, shedding about half its jobs.

Liberals also stress the importance of reversing the long-term decline in unionization, which fell from about one-third of the workforce in the mid-'60s to 12.5 percent today. But even powerful industrial unions have proved little match for the forces of globalization and technological change. The heavily unionized German manufacturing sector has lost about 25 percent of its jobs since 1991.

In response to these forces, workers have migrated from the production side of the economy to the service side. Today, about 12 percent of the white, working class is employed in manufacturing, versus 23 percent in wholesale, retail, and hospitality. These jobs are less sensitive to globalization—a sales clerk in Phoenix doesn't compete with a sales clerk in Kuala Lumpur. And, in theory, labor could organize these workers, too—one proposal before the AFL-CIO at its annual winter meeting this week is to create a $25 million fund for unionizing Wal-Mart's million-plus employees. But even that wouldn't amount to much. At unionized CostCo, a pioneer in using higher pay and benefits to increase productivity, average wages are only $16 per hour. That's far better than at rival Wal-Mart. But it's still 10 percent below the average real wage of a working-class job back in 1972.

Politically, working-class whites seem more and more aware of the fact that Democrats have lost the ability to deliver stable, well-paying jobs. Union members have always been more likely to vote Democratic than the rest of the country. In 1984, Walter Mondale did about 50 percent better among union voters than he did overall. But that advantage has fallen in almost every election since; last year, Kerry did just 26 percent better among union members. The trend is all the more stark when you consider that unions during this period were becoming more African American, more Latino, and more female—something that should have made them more Democratic, not less.

Meyerson notes that Bush's 16-point margin among the working-class whites on the economy is probably overblown, since it tended to move with his numbers on terrorism. But, assuming the economy was a wash—that is, white, working-class voters found Bush's message on ownership and taxes as compelling as Kerry's message on health care and outsourcing—that would still have been devastating for Kerry. After all, working-class whites preferred Bush by 31 points on terrorism. As long as Democrats have only a limited potential to make up ground on economics, they will have to lose far fewer voters on issues related to security and values.

Morally, of course, Democrats have an obligation to defend the economic interests of the working class. While Democrats may no longer be able to deliver high-paying jobs, they can certainly ease the wrenching transition to a global economy—with national health care, spending on education and retraining, generous unemployment benefits, and more effective labor laws. The paradox is that, if Democrats want an opportunity to implement their economic agenda, they are probably not going to get it by emphasizing economics above all else. That may not be satisfying for the populists in the party. But, for the moment, the most satisfying thing of all would be to win an election. **NOAM SCHEIBER**

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Crunch Time

THE SUICIDE BOMBING in Tel Aviv last week left 50 wounded and five dead. Once again, the target was a nightclub—and, once again, the victims were the ordinary innocents of Israeli society out simply to enjoy life. There was the father of two, the carpenter, and the man who supported his sister and her children. There was the acting student about to marry, and the 22-year-old from Jerusalem, her life ahead of her, now behind. (Why so often a nightclub? asks Fouad Ajami. Enticing women, drink, the lure of the forbidden—these are stalkers, these pious and repressed bombers of the Arab world.)

For what? For four years, these random killings were explained by some supporters of the Palestinian cause as "understandable" resistance to the Israeli occupation. Less finicky people called this helter-skelter bloodletting "justified." The real Palestinian purpose was to strike terror in the hearts of ordinary Israelis so that the moral and psychological confidence that the Jewish population had in its own nationhood would erode. That certainly was also Yasir Arafat's notion. The United Nations, France, and the European Union pretended that only "a more reasonable"—that is, a less assertive—Israeli response to the relentless butchery could "end the cycle of violence," the dishonest trope with which they and even some American editorialists tried to equate programmatic savagery with carefully calibrated defense.

There are at least three reasons why last Friday's carnage was the first since November 1. One was that Israel has made major strides in paralyzing the terrorist groups—not only by superior intelligence, but also by targeted assassinations. Second, the barrier that the Israelis are building around most of the West Bank has impeded malintentioned Palestinians from doing their dirty work in Israel. Third, the checkpoints between cities and villages in the territories that cause such real discomfort to ordinary Palestinians also prevent the movement of terrorists from place to place. These three deterrent measures obsessed the left. But they worked.

Then, there was the death of Arafat, for whom the United Nations and the liberal press had been pimping for decades. The Palestinians are lucky that George W. Bush would not be enticed into dealing with Arafat, for, if he had won just one concession from the president, his murderous legacy would have survived his passing and spooked his successors. It is too early to tell Mahmoud Abbas's exact intentions. His words about peace have mostly been equivocal, and no one can expect him simply to accept what Israel offers him. But Ariel Sharon seems comfortable in not pressing him too hard. Despite the post-bombing delay, Israel will soon release 400 more prisoners and vacate five urban areas in the West Bank. The Gaza settlements will be cleared by summer.

Last week's suicide bombing is less a challenge to Israel than it is a threat to Abbas's nascent government. Like taking credit for the deeds of the devil, Islamic Jihad released tapes from the suicide bomber himself and from a movement functionary proudly assuming responsibility for the barbarous event. This time, however, Islamic Jihad said the attack in Tel Aviv was actually targeted at the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah—for serving the interests of the United States. With Bush not at all receptive to unrealistic Palestinian demands, such as "the return of refugees" to "their old homes" in Israel, the Arabs of Palestine have the best chance they have ever had to create a contiguous and reasonably commodious state—and real peace with Israel.

Abbas would prefer to divide the Palestinian ultras of Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Al Aqsa Brigades from their mainstream supporters through a long and intricate process of political absorption, but time and reality are not on his side. The first two of these groups, both movements of Muslim extremists, are headquartered in Syria and financed by Iran. And these Palestinian terrorist gangs do their dirty work on the ground, from emerging Palestine and in Israel. They have amassed plenty of weapons and explosives since the Oslo fantasy was played out on the White House lawn in September 1993.

Abbas and his comrades will have no sleep as long as his confirmed terrorist opposition has the means to kill Israelis, which it has proved it will use. It also has the means to kill Abbas. He must disarm his opponents quickly, because they are sworn enemies of peace. If they strike again and take more innocent Israeli lives, Israel will revert to its irritating habit of protecting its citizens from harm. ■

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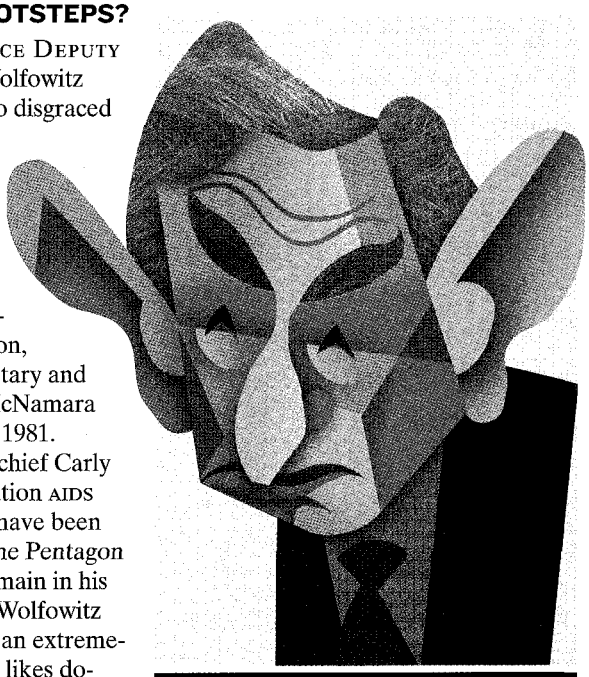
NOTEBOOK

CREATE A QUAGMIRE, BECOME A BANKER . . . AARP ATTACKS CAUSE GOP RANCOR

WALKING IN MAC'S FOOTSTEPS?

IT SEEMS THERE'S A CHANCE Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz may be heading for a post no disgraced Pentagon official should skip—presidency of the World Bank. According to a recent *Financial Times* report, some Bush administration insiders have pegged Wolfowitz as a "leading candidate" for the position, which former Defense Secretary and Vietnam architect Robert McNamara famously filled from 1968 to 1981. (Deposed Hewlett-Packard chief Carly Fiorina and Bush administration AIDS coordinator Randall Tobias have been mentioned as well.) So far, the Pentagon says Wolfowitz intends to remain in his current position. "Secretary Wolfowitz has been asked to stay on in an extremely important job, one that he likes doing very much," a Pentagon spokesman told reporters. But perhaps the Pentagon is just being coy to avoid compromising Wolfowitz's effectiveness—if that's the word.



Paul Wolfowitz

In any case, we hope Wolfie gets the post. Judging from McNamara's resumé, we would think Wolfowitz has all the war-bungling credentials one needed to be qualified. Of course, Mac's achievements at the Bank may prove tough to top. In his 13 years there, McNamara steadfastly advanced what economist Martin Wolf called "a Stalinist vision of development," placing billions of dollars for the world's most backward nations into the stewardship of the world's most grateful kleptocrats.

Still, several things recommend Wolfowitz. For one, he might cut down on staff. After all, he dismissed prewar estimates that a large number of troops would be needed to pacify Iraq as "wildly off the mark." For another, he might set up a decent debtor's prison—one without any of that sissy stuff like food and clothing. When Red Cross officials warned Wolfowitz in January 2004 that Iraqi detainees were being mistreated, he seemed, well, undisturbed. Finally, when it comes to numbers, Wolfowitz won't obsess. Last April, he estimated that 500 or so soldiers had been killed in Iraq when, in fact, 726 had already died. And that obliviousness should be good news for any developing nation looking to borrow some cash. Grab three-quarters of a billion in loans sometime, and, with any luck, Wolfowitz will only remember lending you half.

BLOWBACK FOR THE GOP

USA NEXT, AN OUTFIT PUSHING Social Security privatization, recently ran an ad on the website of the conservative *American Spectator* attacking the AARP—which opposes privatization—as anti-military and pro–gay marriage. The ad was just the tip of a $10 million anti-AARP iceberg. The 35-million-member retirees' group is "the boulder in the middle of the highway to personal savings accounts," said USA Next President Charlie Jarvis. "We will be the dynamite that removes them." Placing that dynamite is a small army of veterans from last summer's Swift Boat smear campaign against John Kerry, including Rick Reed, the Swifties' media production point man; Chris LaCivita, a key adviser; and Regnery Publishing, which put out *Unfit for Command*. Many conservatives, however, aren't happy with blowing up the AARP. "This is not very bright politics," said Michael Tanner of the pro-privatization Cato Institute. And David Frum insisted, "We should be talking, with Social Security, about the numbers and the principle. We don't need to talk about the background." But the GOP may have trouble silencing USA Next and the Swiftie vets. Jarvis told *The New York Times* that "we don't like asking anyone for permission to do anything. . . . We know the people at the White House agree with us." What's the line about chickens coming home to roost?

PROTECTION RACKET

WHEN, EARLIER THIS YEAR, Republican leaders removed three GOP members from the House Ethics Committee, including its chairman and longtime staff director, they insisted the move had nothing to do with the embarrassing admonishments the Committee had issued to Majority Leader Tom DeLay last autumn. Still, there were nonbelievers. Perhaps aware that two new Committee members—including the new chairman, Doc Hastings—have donated to DeLay's legal defense fund and that another reportedly supported a since-abandoned rule change to ensure DeLay could maintain his leadership post even if he were indicted in Texas, ousted Ethics Committee Chairman Joel Hefley sounded concerned. "Nobody should be there to protect anybody," he told *The Washington Post*.

Now comes the new Committee's

DAVID COWLES

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first test. According to records obtained by *National Journal*, DeLay and his wife were the beneficiaries of a $28,000 trip to Scotland in 2000 (including a golf outing to St. Andrews), paid for by a conservative think tank called the Center for Public Policy Research. Such junkets are, unfortunately, perfectly ethical, at least by Congress's relativistic definition. What may not be, however, is that disgraced Republican superlobbyist Jack Abramoff—now best known for bilking millions from Native American casino-owners, whom he sometimes called "monkeys"—apparently covered the DeLays' $4,285.35 stay at the Four Seasons Hotel in London. House rules prohibit members from accepting travel expenses from a registered lobbyist.

Why would Abramoff risk an ethics flap by paying for the DeLays' hotel when the think tank was apparently paying for the overall trip? (Why an obscure right-wing think tank paid to ferry DeLay & Co. across the Atlantic in the first place is another puzzle; but the fact that Abramoff was on its board at the time is suggestive.) And was DeLay aware that Abramoff had picked up his hotel tab? Such questions surely merit an investigation. That is, if the newly reconstituted Ethics Committee's Republican members really care about the integrity of Congress, and not simply whitewashing the sleazy behavior of their masters.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

In "Organic Chemistry," by John B. Judis (February 21), the Democratic voter-mobilization group America Coming Together was misidentified as Americans Coming Together.

Because of an editing error, "In Withdrawal" by Yossi Klein Halevi (March 7) incorrectly stated that Effie Eitam does not see the refusal of some Israeli soldiers to participate in the Gaza withdrawal as "an existential threat" to the Israel Defense Forces. In fact, he does regard refusal as an existential threat. We regret the errors. ■

TNR.commentary

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

YOU THOUGHT THE STATE-DEFENSE SPLIT WAS CONTENTIOUS?: In light of the murder of more than 125 innocent Iraqis on February 28 in a car bombing in Hilla—the deadliest single attack of the insurgency to date—it makes sense to reassess Iraq's still-coalescing political scene. *The Wall Street Journal* suggests that the Shia leadership has made a calculated decision about how to portray such attacks—that is, the Shia are "constantly blaming the attacks on terrorists with links to Al Qaeda rather than on homegrown resistance by the Sunni Muslim minority." It's a wise strategy, and it is apparently paying dividends. A United Iraqi Alliance official tells the *Journal*, "When the Sunnis talk to us now, they insist they are separate from the terrorists because they don't want Iraqi blood on their hands."

The Kurds are not so sure. Kurdish officials shared their assessment of how Abu Musab Al Zarqawi's network operates with *Newsday* in December. In their telling, Zarqawi is a more marginal player in the insurgency than are Baathist and other Iraqi Sunni confederates:

> Kurdish officials say the insurgency found renewed strength in northern Iraq in May, after the Baath Party held a meeting in the Syrian town of Hasaka.
>
> The party reorganized itself, expelling more than half the membership, or anyone who had dealings with the United States, the Iraqi government or even humanitarian aid groups. The new Baath leaders are Mohammad Younis al-Ahmad and Ibrahim Sabawi, Hussein's half-brother and the former head of Iraq's general security directorate.
>
> The new leadership found support in Mosul, which had been an important base for Hussein's military and security apparatus, providing more than a third of all Iraqi officers. "The insurgents are using the infrastructure of the old Iraqi army," [Sadi Ahmed] Pire, [a leading Kurdish security official in Mosul] said. "In Mosul alone, there were more generals than in all of America."
>
> [PUK security chief Dana Ahmed] Majid noted that the focus on al-Zarqawi takes some of the pressure off lesser-known Baathist leaders. "These people like to remain anonymous," Majid said. "If everyone is looking for al-Zarqawi, they have more room to operate."

Nothing that the Kurds are saying here contradicts the Shia assessment of the insurgency, since that assessment is less an intelligence brief than a mechanism to advance a political strategy of inclusion.

The significant difference between the two assessments is found in their varying implications for counterinsurgency strategy. The Kurds are clearly suggesting that defeating the insurgency requires harsher measures against Sunni population centers—particularly those that, one can't help but notice, abut Kurdistan—while the Shia don't quite appear to be at that stage. It's extremely difficult to say how the United Iraqi Alliance–led government will combat the insurgency, since its leaders speak about it only obliquely. In a recent interview with the Associated Press, leading Alliance figure Abdul Aziz Al Hakim suggested that the first step the Alliance should take to provide security for Iraq is to purge the security services:

> We must depend on the sons of the Iraqi people who believe in the new Iraq, and not on those bad elements that infiltrated the security circles and turned into a problem. ... All the people which the former regime brought and depended on must be chased out.

If Hakim's purge takes place, it will very likely be seen as a purge of Sunnis and a return to extensive de-Baathification. If the Coalition Provisional Authority's shot at this is any prologue, such a move will inflame the insurgency.

But it certainly appears that the Alliance is also attempting to seek political dialogue with some Sunni leaders to drain support for the insurgency, though whether those efforts will be any more successful than outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's remains to be seen.

It seems fair to say that the Kurdish position on counterinsurgency is that, the more severe the campaign gets, the better, while the Shia position is more conciliatory. These positions fit the two factions' perceptions of their interests fairly well. The Kurds, with 100,000 *peshmerga* under arms, want as much freedom from Arab Iraq as possible and are prepared to fight to defend that autonomy. By contrast, the Shia need some amount of Sunni buy-in so as to preserve their gains on top of a united (if federal) new political order in Iraq. Of course, the next government will be formed by the Kurdish and Shia blocs—which suggests that disputes over counterinsurgency could be an early fault line for the fledgling administration.

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Luntz's weak advice.

Write Off

BY RYAN LIZZA

THE SOCIAL SECURITY debate crossed an important threshold last week, one that confirmed its place in the big leagues of Washington spectacle. A "secret" memo from Frank Luntz on how the GOP should talk about the issue was leaked.

Luntz is the pudgy and disheveled pollster whose missives on how Republicans can retain power surface during every Washington drama. In 1994, when Luntz helped create the Contract with America, his memos on how to thwart Bill Clinton and win the House regularly made news. In 1995, a Luntz memo surfaced on how to talk about Medicare ("[I]f we can't prove that Medicare is going bankrupt, we'll never be able to sell our solutions") and, in 1996, one appeared advising Republicans to plant trees in their districts ("[W]e in the GOP have articulated environmental policies so badly for so long that virtually no one trusts us"). In 1997, the papers quoted a confidential Luntz memo recommending that Republicans back off from their investigations of Clinton. Luntz memos flowed like water in 1998 as he offered his wisdom on impeachment. In 2001, there was his notorious memo advising Republicans to destroy Tom Daschle. In 2002, there was the Luntz memo on how the GOP should talk about the environment.

Luntz's latest masterpiece is 160 pages long. According to *National Journal*, it was first presented to members at a recent Republican retreat, and then Luntz personally handed it out on the Hill in early February. Not fond of understatement, Luntz calls his current manifesto *The New American Lexicon 2005*. And, as with every previous memo, the *Lexicon* presents Luntz as a linguistic Moses delivering advice so momentous that it might as well be carved in stone: "I am reminded," he writes in the introduction, "of the political chant so commonly repeated in the 1960s. ... If not us, who? If not now, when? Now is the time. This is the place. You are the people. And these are the words."

But, slogging through Luntz's brain-numbing new tome, I was reminded of a different refrain: "How stupid are politicians who listen to Frank Luntz?" By page three, it's clear that Luntz is more huckster than Svengali. His advice, rather than brilliant and Orwellian, is mediocre and obvious. It is a wonder that Republicans still treat him as an oracle and Democrats as a threat.

EVEN IN THE pompous world of celebrity political consultants, Luntz's knack for self-promotion has been impressive. During Clinton's impeachment, he would sometimes stand outside private Republican meetings and hand out his musings to legislators as they departed. He is prone to speaking of himself in the third person, such as when he recently told an interviewer, with penetrating historical insight, "Bill Clinton made Frank Luntz because Bill Clinton discovered the power and the influence of words." While other pollsters keep a veil of secrecy around their work to ensure that clients trust them, Luntz opens up his work for the press, scoring a profile in *The New Yorker* in 2000 and appearing in a recent documentary on "Frontline." Indeed, the worst-kept secret in Washington is that it is Luntz himself who has often leaked his memos to the press. (Luntz is so famous for this that, back in 2002, when one of his memos really did get leaked by someone else, reporters howled with laughter at Luntz's complaints.)

Like many pundits and political hustlers, Luntz dispenses his advice with absolute certainty. When it turns out to be dead wrong, he instantly dispenses the opposite opinion with equal confidence. For instance, on Election Day last year, according to several sources, Luntz circulated a memo to his clients explaining why John Kerry had won. In his latest memo, he outlines the various factors that made George W. Bush's victory inevitable.

But Luntz has never been known for his electoral analysis. He is famous for his aggressive recasting of the language politicians use to hawk their policies, often urging them to use cynical rhetorical devices and phrases that anesthetize controversial ideas or even mean the opposite of the policies themselves. Enter his latest memo, which advises Republicans on how to sell the Bush Social Security plan: "If Americans think you want to protect and enhance their retirement security, they'll back you. If they think you want to reduce their benefits—for ANY reason—they'll oppose you." The trick, according to Luntz, is to concentrate on the former even though you'll be delivering the latter.

Like his new imitators on the left, especially George Lakoff, the Berkeley linguist and author of the best-selling *Don't Think of an Elephant*, Luntz helps his party maintain the fiction that there is no such thing as bad policy, only bad communications. To Luntz, there is no lemon that can't be sold to the American people, who, in his memos, invariably come off as a sad sack of humanity, as easily manipulated as a classroom of kindergartners. "When you speak of the 2005 legislative agenda," Luntz urges, "do not be afraid to wax poetic about this link between American icons of freedom and opportunity and the very legislation you are discussing. It will not seem trite. It will not appear sordid." And never get bogged down in the details: "It is tempting to counterattack using facts and figures. Resist the temptation."

THE LEFT-WING BLOGOSPHERE has been hyperventilating about the disingenuousness of Luntz's linguistic flim-flam. But the real problem with Luntz isn't that he debases politics with his tricks about finding the "perfect" words to sell unpopular policies. The real problem is that his advice is either blindingly obvious or just plain bad.

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Consider Luntz's counsel to "pick out some issues that matter to the base and HOLD some of them until the second year of the Congress." Saving gay marriage or other wedge issues for an election year may sound like a profound and devious strategy, but it is doubtful Dennis Hastert and Bill Frist need Frank Luntz to explain this to them. It has been done every election cycle on both sides of the congressional aisle. Another of Luntz's strokes of genius is that every Republican in a tough district should begin a campaign of "fundraising, voter contact, message development, and grassroots operations." Before Luntz turned it into a bullet point in bold type on the third page of his memo, this insightful strategy was known simply as running for reelection.

One of Luntz's most serious pieces of advice for Republicans—I am not making this up—is to use the American flag, the bald eagle, and the Statue of Liberty in campaign commercials. He insists upon this, and dwells on the strategy at length. (Presumably, the days when Republicans foolishly used the hammer and sickle are over.) In fact, Luntz Research Companies has even determined that, of the three icons, the Statue of Liberty is preferable. "64% of Americans chose [it] as one of the greatest symbols of American patriotism," Luntz writes. Similarly, Luntz has aggregated the data from his focus groups and determined the following: "The best way to communicate values is to use words and phrases that no Coke-drinking, apple-pie eating American could disagree with. *Family. Freedom. Opportunity. Responsibility. Community.*" (Imagine the power and innovation of a political ad that combines pictures of the Statue of Liberty and a bald eagle with a voice-over about family and freedom!)

When Luntz is not recycling the most hackneyed political tropes, his other obsession is the political stunt. The way to pass the GOP's lawsuit legislation is a photo-op where "10 of the Fortune 100 CEOs come to Washington and announce that, if the Senate will pass lawsuit abuse reform, they each will pledge to hire 10,000 new employees in the next year." Luntz is very bullish on the power of beating up on the IRS. In the latest memo, he uses capital letters, bold type, *and* an underline to make his point about the dreaded tax bureaucracy: "**WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, GO AFTER THE IRS.**" In fact, Luntz says, "[T]he single greatest public relations success of the Republican Congressional majority" was the 1997 hearings about IRS abuse. Don't remember the IRS hearings? Luntz does. Naturally, it was his idea, as outlined in a memo leaked to the press that year. ■

Agree? Disagree?

Got something to add?

Write The New Republic's editors at letters@tnr.com

On the Hill

Local Yokels

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

In late January, Republican members of Congress convened at a rural West Virginia resort to plot strategy for the new congressional session and the 2006 midterm elections. They held meetings, on issues like Social Security and tax reform, led by committee chairmen and even the president himself. But no session generated as much interest as the one led by a mere freshman, John Thune of South Dakota. It's rare for such a junior senator to lecture his wizened colleagues. But Thune's elders listened with rapt attention as he explained how bloggers and partisan Internet "journalism" helped him defeat former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle last fall. David Winston, a GOP pollster who was present, says that, "given that success story, the senators were very interested. ... A lot of conversation went back and forth. I think we were scheduled for about an hour, and it went an hour and a half." Even senators who missed out on the session have been asking for details of Thune's story. "Other senators have asked him in private how he worked with the bloggers," says Thune spokesman Alex Conant.

The surging influence bloggers and partisan Internet journalists are exerting over national media is hardly a secret. Just ask Trent Lott, Dan Rather, or former CNN executive Eason Jordan. But what Thune was trying to explain to his colleagues was something less well-understood: the influence bloggers can wield over the *local* media, which largely shape and referee House and Senate races. As it happens, a key player in the Thune-Daschle race was the now-notorious Jeff Gannon (née Guckert), the conservative *Talon News* correspondent with a thing for dog tags and big muscles. Yet Gannon's role is less important than the larger implications—which Republicans seem to be grasping faster than Democrats—blogs have for the coming 2006 congressional elections.

Hardly a silicon prairie, South Dakota might seem an improbable place for bloggers to have an impact. But conservatives there have long felt—as they have at the national level—that the state's dominant media had a liberal bias that needed to be challenged. For years, Republicans groused that the state's largest newspaper, the Sioux Falls *Argus Leader*, was out of step with South Dakota's increasingly conservative bent. In particular, they felt the paper was soft on Daschle, often ignoring or downplaying negative stories about the Senate Democratic leader. The result, they felt, was that Daschle got kid-glove treatment in other local media, which

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follow the *Argus Leader*'s, well, lead.

As Thune prepared his race against Daschle, South Dakota conservatives began softening up the newspaper. In 2003, two blogs appeared. The first was called South Dakota Politics. Written by University of South Dakota law student Jason Van Beek, its inaugural post declared war on "the lazy journalism practiced by South Dakota's flagship newspaper," the *Argus Leader*. The second site, Daschle v. Thune, also began pounding on the *Argus Leader*—and, more specifically, the paper's veteran political writer, David Kranz, who has long been considered the dean of South Dakota political journalism. Ultimately, this blogger would identify himself as Jon Lauck, a South Dakota State University history professor—neglecting to mention his past as a local GOP operative and chairman of the Lawyers for Thune Committee. Neither Lauck nor Van Beek would reveal payments—of $27,000 and $8,000, respectively—from the Thune campaign itself. (Van Beek has since joined Thune's Senate staff.)

Enter Jeff Gannon. In summer 2004, the sometime male escort—his decidedly un-conservative past still unknown—wrote a series of articles targeting Kranz, whom he called a liberal Democrat sympathetic to Daschle. Gannon was cozy with the Thune campaign from the start, hosting the candidate on his Internet talk show. And he worked in tandem with the local bloggers, picking up on their complaints about the *Argus Leader*. Van Beek crowed, for instance, that Kranz had helped Daschle stage a mock Democratic convention when they were in college together; combing the archived papers of a former local Democratic congressman, he also unearthed staff memos from the 1970s that referred to Kranz as a "good Democrat" with whom the staff could cooperate. Gannon turned such revelations into a series of *Talon News* articles, which he e-mailed to reporters across South Dakota, many of whom were unaware that *Talon News* was a propaganda arm of GOPUSA, a partisan Republican website.

With Gannon's stories spreading across the Internet and local conservative talk radio, the *Argus Leader* felt the heat. A "siege mentality" developed at the paper, as one staffer explained to *National Journal* last year. And, when it came time to assign a reporter to the Daschle-Thune race, Daschle aides were shocked to learn that Kranz—who had routinely covered the state's biggest political stories for decades—would not be on the beat. Instead the race was primarily covered by a reporter named Jon Walker.

Daschle aides felt the Thune campaign exploited Walker's political inexperience and that the reporter gave Daschle undeservedly rough treatment. (One Daschle operative says Walker was a religious conservative who, to his amazement, appeared on Democratic Party voter-identification lists as having declared himself a pro-Thune voter in 2002 and 2004.) They also felt that *Argus Leader* editors, on the defensive, were more susceptible to negative stories about their candidate. Gannon and the bloggers hammered away, flogging negative stories about Daschle and demanding to know why the local media wasn't picking them up. For instance, Daschle's former campaign manager, Steve Hildebrand, believes that Gannon was leaked a blistering memo from a local bishop denouncing Daschle's position on abortion and questioning his standing as a Catholic. "Gannon wrote a piece, and [local conservative talk-radio host] Greg Belfrage talked about it, and [local station KELO's] newsroom took it off his show. Then every news source in the state covered it—TV, the AP, newspapers." Including the *Argus Leader*.

Gannon also hounded Daschle with a story about how the senator declared his Georgetown "mansion" his primary residence in order to win a minor tax deduction in Washington, D.C., questioning whether that made Daschle ineligible to run in South Dakota. Hildebrand says an *Argus Leader* editor told him he felt bound to chase Gannon's story. Soon after the election, an *Argus Leader* source also told *National Journal* that the paper had been pressured into running an extra story on the lobbying activities of Daschle's wife, Linda—a favorite theme of Daschle-bashers in Washington—even though it had already published a long profile of her. Asked by the magazine whether Gannon and the bloggers had influenced his paper's coverage, *Argus Leader* Assistant Managing Editor Patrick Lalley replied, "I don't think there's any way to say they didn't."

As they contemplate their candidate's 4,500-vote margin of defeat, former Daschle aides say they can't ignore the role played by Gannon and the bloggers. "I don't blame them, but they were definitely a layer of the race," says Dan Pfeiffer, Daschle's former campaign spokesman.

THIS STORY IS no doubt a sign of things to come. Operatives in both parties are already plotting ways to manipulate the local media in the coming 2006 elections. One GOP campaign operative I spoke to suggests that North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad, who faces reelection this fall, could be vulnerable to a blog offensive. Conrad is a heavyweight Democrat in a strongly pro-Bush state. "The *Fargo Forum* shills for the Democrats in North Dakota," the operative says. "Maybe we need another blog experience in North Dakota." The operative also says that *The Denver Post* and newspapers in Florida could be open to similar treatment. Hildebrand offers this advice to nascent 2006 campaign teams: "Go find five people who will create blogs on your behalf."

There are already signs of such activity. A few months ago, a Minnesota-based blog appeared called Dayton v. Kennedy, dedicated to supporting GOP candidate Mark Kennedy against incumbent Democratic Senator Mark Dayton. (Dayton has since announced he won't run; the blog awaits the new Democratic candidate.) Sure enough, the blog has targeted local media outlets like the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, leveling charges of liberal bias. The blog's author, Gary Matthew Miller, claims in an e-mail that he is no GOP plant. But, he says, "I will acknowledge inspiration from Daschle v. Thune." He's surely not going to be the only one. ■

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The Court and religion.
Big Ten

BY JEFFREY ROSEN

THIS WEEK, THE Supreme Court heard arguments about the constitutionality of displaying the Ten Commandments in and around courthouses. As with all hotly contested questions of American life, the tie-breaking vote may be cast by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and her reaction to two very different Ten Commandment displays in Texas and Kentucky is anyone's guess. But the Ten Commandments case is an important window into the Supreme Court battles to come, because it reveals the stark difference between conservatives like O'Connor, who genuinely believe the state should be neutral between religion and secularism, and conservatives like Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and William Rehnquist, who yearn to resurrect open state support for religion, including school prayer.

During oral arguments in the Ten Commandments case, O'Connor declined to tip her hand. (Scalia, by contrast, said that courts should be able to declare explicitly that "the government's authority comes from God.") But, in past cases, O'Connor has made clear that she would ask the following question: Would a reasonable person perceive the Ten Commandment displays as an endorsement of religion? In the Pledge of Allegiance case last year (which the Court ducked at the last minute), O'Connor fleshed out her views: Public acknowledgments of religion are less likely to be struck down when they have gone unchallenged for a long time, when they don't involve worship or prayer, when they don't refer to a particular religion, and when they contain minimal religious content.

IF SHE APPLIES these factors, O'Connor might well strike down one of the Ten Commandments displays and uphold the other. But it's hard to predict which. The less troubling display is arguably in Texas, a huge, six-foot granite tablet located between the Texas state capitol and Texas Supreme Court. It is part of a series of 18 supersized historical monuments, ranging from the Heroes of the Alamo (donated in 1891) to the Texas Peace Officer's Memorial (donated in 1999). The Ten Commandments were donated in 1961 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, an association of theater owners who were working with Cecil B. DeMille to promote his movie retelling the story of Moses. The Eagles modeled their monument on publicity shots from DeMille's picture, hired Charlton Heston to dedicate it, and consulted an interfaith committee of Jews, Protestants, and Catholics to make it as ecumenically tacky as possible. The Texas version has the text of the Ten Commandments in huge letters, adorned by an American flag, a Star of David, and the Greek letters for Christ. In the past, the Supreme Court has subscribed to what lawyers call a "three plastic animals" rule for religious displays: If a crèche in a town square, for example, is surrounded by a wishing well and a laughing clown, it's constitutional. The logic is that reasonable observers perceive unadorned religious displays to be endorsements of religion, while the addition of kitschy accoutrements turns the display into a celebration of Americana. Judged by this kitsch test, the Hollywood version of the Ten Commandments, surrounded by equally garish secular monuments, arguably passes muster.

By contrast, the Ten Commandment display in Kentucky, also being challenged before the Supreme Court, has a more troubling history. In 1999, after lobbying by evangelical Christians, two Kentucky counties passed resolutions encouraging the posting of the Ten Commandments in local courthouses. Citing former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore's unsuccessful attempts to display the Commandments in his courthouse approvingly, the counties said their purpose was to demonstrate the "inseparable connection" between Kentucky laws and "Christian principles." After this display was successfully challenged as blatantly unconstitutional, the counties gussied up the display with quotations from historical documents referring to God, such as the Declaration of Independence and Ronald Reagan's declaration of the year of the Bible in 1983. Sued once again, the counties came up with a third display, surrounding the Ten Commandments with a few patriotic speeches and songs, packaging the collection as a display of documents that have "profoundly influenced the formation of Western thought."

In the Pledge of Allegiance case, O'Connor said that a reasonable observer can be expected to understand the context in which a religious display appears. Anyone familiar with the history of the Kentucky Ten Commandments display would understand it as a transparent effort by the state to endorse a controversial proposition about the centrality of religion in U.S. law. It's possible, of course, that O'Connor could come out the other way—ruling that the cheesy Texas monument is an unadorned religious text while the Kentucky display at least attempts to put the Commandments in a secular context. (As Stephen Breyer noted, the contentious history of the litigation will eventually be forgotten.) But, either way, O'Connor's legal focus is a sensible one. Asking whether a particular display endorses religion is another way of asking whether the state has remained neutral between religion and secularism, neither promoting religion nor discouraging it.

In the Ten Commandments case, social-conservative organizations are urging the Court to abandon O'Connor's focus on neutrality and instead ask whether a particular display coerces religious belief. They cite the opinions of Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas, who have argued that government should be free to promote religion in general, as

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long as it doesn't discriminate among religions. And they agree with those three that a focus on coercion would allow the government to resurrect voluntary school prayer and to post the Ten Commandments in courtrooms or schools.

But Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas's view is historically questionable. It has been explicitly challenged by Judge Michael McConnell of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, the leading conservative scholar of religious liberty, whose potential Supreme Court candidacy is being enthusiastically championed by social conservatives. In 1992, McConnell argued that the best historical evidence refuted Rehnquist's claim that the framers of the Constitution believed that the federal government could aid religion as long as it did so ecumenically. Moreover, it was McConnell who, in 1986, proposed an emphasis on coercion as the touchstone of religious freedom—a proposal that Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas later embraced. But, as Douglas Laycock of the University of Texas puts it, "McConnell's vision of coercion is vastly more nuanced than Rehnquist and Scalia's." McConnell, for example, disagrees with Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas that the First Amendment allows school prayer. "It is vital to understand the concept of coercion broadly and realistically," he wrote in 1992. "I would have thought that gathering a captive audience is a classic example of coercion; participation is hardly voluntary if the cost of avoiding the prayer is to miss one's graduation." How McConnell would rule on the display of the Ten Commandments by Kentucky and Texas is hard to guess. But McConnell's willingness to struggle with hard questions involving public acknowledgment of religion shows that his commitment to neutrality is genuine. It's not a strategic compromise on the path toward a larger goal of an openly religious state.

THE MODERATE POSITION sketched by O'Connor and McConnell is especially important in a post–September 11 world. As Europe confronts the growing threat of Islamic extremism, countries like France are attempting to denude the public square of all religious displays—for example, forbidding young Muslim girls from wearing headscarves as a threat to the secular state. But the French effort to crack down on even private religious speech is an expression of the same overzealous secularism that led the French revolutionaries of earlier times to smash the faces of carved saints in the cathedrals. There is a similar zealotry in the air in the United States, as radical separationists are attempting to cleanse the public square of even ceremonial acknowledgments of our religious history while radical supremacists yearn for open state support of religion. The Supreme Court should reject both extremist positions. By ruling that the Ten Commandments can be displayed as long as the state isn't attempting to endorse a particular view about the centrality of religion in American life, the Court may not satisfy secular liberals or social conservatives. But it could provide a model of a healthy relationship between church and state. ■

Rendition sunshine?

Suspect Policy

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN

IT'S DIFFICULT TO see Faten Abu Ali's expression, since her white veil leaves only her eyes uncovered. But those eyes are red, and her voice quivers with fear. With good reason: Last week, the government unsealed an indictment charging her 23-year-old son, Ahmed, with aiding Al Qaeda terrorists and plotting to assassinate President Bush—charges that could carry an 80-year prison sentence. Yet, while frightened, she also feels vindicated. "We consider it a victory just having our son here," she says.

That's because, for the past 20 months, Ahmed Abu Ali, an American citizen, wasn't here. He was detained at Al Hair Prison in Saudi Arabia as a suspected terrorist, and, though he may indeed be one, he was never charged with any crime. Not only did the Bush administration never seek Abu Ali's extradition, but officials from the Federal Bureau of Investigation also took part in his Saudi-led interrogation—which, when the FBI was not there, may have included torture. In response, Abu Ali's family filed a civil action against the U.S. government last summer, petitioning Judge John Bates of the D.C. Circuit to issue a writ of habeas corpus, which would have forced the government to return Abu Ali to the United States. As the case proceeded—over the objections of the Justice Department—the government did just that: Abu Ali was suddenly whisked back, appearing on U.S. soil for the first time in nearly two years at federal district court last Tuesday, to face criminal charges.

But the civil case doesn't just seek Abu Ali's return. It seeks a determination that his detention and interrogation in Saudi Arabia were unlawful, a determination that could challenge perhaps the most controversial aspect of the war on terrorism: the policy of "extraordinary rendition," whereby suspected terrorists are sent to foreign allies, where their questioning need not be inhibited by U.S. laws barring torture. Bates ruled in December that the U.S. government had to disclose in court any information about its role in Abu Ali's foreign detention, putting rendition on a path to public scrutiny.

Ironically, Abu Ali's criminal indictment threatens that disclosure. Now that he will stand trial, the original purpose of his civil suit—returning him to the United States—has been satisfied, and the Justice Department will seek to dismiss it. If Justice succeeds, it will have preempted one of the most significant attempts yet to cast light on extraordinary rendition. In other words, an initial victory for Abu Ali might represent a setback for keeping the war on terrorism in line with U.S. human rights obligations.

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In June 2003, after an Al Qaeda bomb in Riyadh killed more than 30 people, Saudi authorities arrested Abu Ali at the Islamic University of Medina, where he was studying on a scholarship. Three other American citizens were also detained, extradited to the United States, and charged with involvement in a Northern Virginia jihadist cell. Initially, American officials suspected Abu Ali of being part of the same cell. Five days after Abu Ali's arrest, FBI agents searched his family's house in Virginia and discovered jihadist books and audio tapes, as well as a document on how to avoid surveillance.

But Abu Ali was never charged with any wrongdoing. He remained in Saudi custody—though he received visits from FBI interrogators. As his imprisonment dragged on, some American officials became less convinced of Abu Ali's involvement in terrorism. In June 2004, Michael A. Mason, assistant director of the FBI's Washington field office, told members of Abu Ali's Falls Church mosque that, when he asked his colleagues whether "we have a continuing interest in this individual ... the answer I got was no." But, if American interrogators didn't have an interest in Abu Ali, prosecutors did: Court papers filed by Abu Ali's parents allege that a State Department consular official told them in June 2004 that the Justice Department was still investigating their son.

All this led Abu Ali's family to believe that the United States was using the Saudis to detain Abu Ali indefinitely and subject him to conditions from which U.S. citizenship is supposed to protect him—including torture, routine in Saudi Arabia. As a result, his family filed the habeas corpus petition in July 2004. Justice Department attorneys argued that U.S. courts had no jurisdiction over American citizens held by foreign governments. But Bates, a George W. Bush appointee, rejected this contention in mid-December, ruling, "The Court concludes that a citizen cannot be so easily separated from his constitutional rights.... There is at least some circumstantial evidence that Abu Ali has been tortured during interrogations with the knowledge of the United States." He then ordered the U.S. government to disclose evidence detailing its role in Abu Ali's detention and interrogation.

Bates's order was the first ever to demand that the United States publicly detail information about renditions. Not surprisingly, the government has gone to what Bates called "highly unusual" lengths to fight the judge's ruling. Last month, it filed a motion to dismiss the case based not only on secret evidence, but also on an undisclosed argument—a "legal argument [that] itself cannot be made public without disclosing the classified information that underlies it." But, before Bates could rule on the matter, Abu Ali turned up in the United States to stand trial for providing material support to Al Qaeda and intending to kill Bush.

According to a Justice Department spokesman, Bates's ruling "had nothing to do" with the decision to finally indict Abu Ali, whom the government says confessed the Bush plot to the Saudis in July 2003—a confession the defense will undoubtedly argue was coerced. Not surprisingly, Abu Ali's lawyers see things differently. "The timing speaks for itself," says David Cole, a Georgetown law professor representing Abu Ali. "Only when the government was threatened with having to disclose its arrangements with Saudi Arabia regarding Mr. Abu Ali's detention did it take action, bring him back, and indict him." And that's hardly the only matter under dispute. In court last week, Abu Ali's lawyers attempted to show evidence of torture. The next day, the government alleged that a doctor who examined Abu Ali in the U.S. "found no evidence of any physical mistreatment." And, in court Tuesday, the defense claimed that, in between interrogation sessions with the FBI in September 2003, Abu Ali was "handcuffed to something overhead" by his Saudi jailers.

In a hearing last Thursday, Bates gave Abu Ali's lawyers until next week to file papers arguing against the dismissal of the civil case. If Bates rules against them, however, efforts to publicly examine the U.S. role in Abu Ali's detention and possible abuse could founder, since a criminal case might not shed as much light. "There are many things that could happen in a criminal proceeding. The government could decide to treat him as an unlawful enemy combatant," says Morton Sklar, another of Abu Ali's lawyers—a decision that could seriously limit the information that would come out of any proceeding. "You have no guarantee the facts are going to come out." Similarly, legal experts say, the government could seek to leverage the gravity of the charges against Abu Ali to get him to drop the civil case as part of a plea agreement.

If the civil case goes away, the public could be denied a trove of information about unspeakable acts. On March 13, 2002, administration officials—allegedly including then–White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales—prepared a memo authorizing rendition. Its contents have never been revealed, but its consequences have. Australian citizen Mamdouh Habib, arrested in Pakistan in October 2001, alleges that the United States turned him over to Egypt, where he was "suspended from hooks on the wall." Canadian citizen Maher Arar, arrested by American officials at Kennedy Airport in September 2002, was rendered to the Syrians, who allegedly beat him for over a year.

The White House's official posture was expressed by Gonzales in January. "It is my understanding that the United States does not render individuals to countries where we believe it is more likely than not they will be tortured," he wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee. But, in the war on terrorism, the United States believes what it wants to about torture: Syria, after all, has a long history of human rights abuses.

This see-no-evil posture is exactly what makes the civil case so significant, whether or not Abu Ali is guilty. The civil case's disclosure order could jeopardize the position that the administration is unaware of what happens to detainees it sends to foreign countries. "The filings suggest the case has the potential to expose the fallacy of the clean-hands theory—that, if we just send [suspected terrorists] to foreign countries, we're fine," says Juliette Kayyem, director of the national security program at Harvard University. That is, unless the administration shuts the case down first. ■

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Presumed guilty.

Trial by Fury

BY JASON ZENGERLE

CHRISTMAS CAME EARLY and often last year for Nancy Grace. In mid-November, a jury in Redwood City, California, found Scott Peterson guilty of the murder of his wife, Laci, and their unborn son, Conner; then, on December 13, that same jury recommended that Peterson be sentenced to death. Grace, the feisty blonde Court TV anchor who had been covering the Peterson case from virtually the moment Laci Peterson was reported missing nearly two years earlier, could hardly hide her satisfaction with the decisions. Broadcasting from just outside the courthouse on the day of the verdict, she brandished a fresh copy of *The San Francisco Examiner* with the giant headline "SCOTT GUILTY!" and proclaimed in a hushed, melodramatic tone, "Today, for this moment, there is justice for Laci and Conner." After the jury recommended death for Peterson—a decision that was greeted with cheers and high-fives by the throngs of people who had gathered on the courthouse plaza—Grace seemed to join in the revelry, telling her viewers, "A jury has spoken, and if you listen to those jurors the way I did today, you know that justice has been done."

For Grace, the denouement of the Peterson case was about more than justice; it was personal. From her anchor's perch on the Court TV show "Closing Arguments" and her guest's chair on CNN's "Larry King Live"—where, thanks to the Peterson soap opera, she has become a fixture—Grace vehemently and repeatedly pointed an accusatory finger at Peterson. She called him a "liar" and a "sociopath" and a man who "clearly thinks the rules do not apply to him." A former prosecutor herself, Grace seemed to have as much riding on his guilt as the district attorney actually handling the case; she had practically staked her professional reputation on it. "In my mind, he seems guilty beyond a reasonable doubt," she told King's viewers in April 2003—eight days after Peterson was charged and more than a year before his trial would begin.

This rush to judgment made Grace a lightning rod for criticism and frequently left her on the defensive. "If someone from Mars came down and watched 'Larry King Live' and saw Nancy Grace on it, they [would] wonder why we have things called trials because everyone is so clearly guilty," griped one of King's other legal analysts. And it wasn't just Grace's fellow talking heads taking her to task. On one King show, Scott Peterson's father, Lee, even called in to excoriate her. "[Y]ou've crucified my son on national media," he lectured Grace. "[Y]ou sit there as a judge and jury ... convicting him on the national media, and you should be absolutely ashamed of yourself."

So, when a jury confirmed what Grace had been saying all along, she was in the mood to do a little gloating. She pointedly reminded her fellow legal analysts of their predictions—of a not-guilty verdict, of a mistrial, of a life sentence. "How are those sour grapes tonight? How are they tasting?" she goaded one of them on her Court TV show. And then she rubbed it in a little more. Was she surprised by the verdict? King asked her. "Not surprised at all," she replied in a boastful tone. "In fact, as I waited, number-one in line, to get into the courtroom for the verdict, Larry, everyone was discussing what the verdict would be. I had no doubt in my mind."

THE PETERSON TRIAL transformed Nancy Grace from a low-wattage talking head into a bona fide media star—so much so that, while the Peterson legal soap opera is over, Grace is certainly not. She continues with her daily Court TV show, "Closing Arguments," which has now moved on to the latest trial of the century, the Michael Jackson child molestation case. This summer, Hyperion will publish *Objection!*, Grace's book on the criminal justice system. And, last month, Grace debuted an eponymous prime-time legal affairs show on CNN Headline News. This new show, some industry watchers speculate, is merely a prelude to an even bigger assignment: replacing Larry King when he decides to hang up his suspenders. CNN has tried to tamp down this sort of talk, but the network is obviously high on Grace. "Nancy is a unique personality," CNN's president, Jim Walton, said in announcing her new show. "One of the things that we all look for in television is somebody to break through."

Indeed, Grace has done more than just break through. She has become the leading practitioner of the relatively new and increasingly popular cable news format: the legal shout-fest. It was only ten years ago that the O.J. Simpson case demonstrated to cable programmers that there was a TV audience for celebrity trials and, in the process, gave birth to a new class of legal pundits, such as Greta Van Susteren and Jeffrey Toobin. But, while there was much handwringing over this development at the time, TV legal analysis circa 1995 looks, in retrospect, as staid and dignified as a Supreme Court deliberation when compared with today's legal punditry. Back then, legal analysts' primary function was to explain to viewers what was happening in the courtroom. "We never wanted our people to take sides in a trial," says Steve Brill, who, in 1991, started Court TV, the network that set the tone for the rest of cable's legal

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programming. "We didn't want to make a trial a 'Crossfire'-like event."

But that's exactly what has happened, as first Court TV (which Brill sold to Time Warner in 1997) and then the cable news channels adopted the political shouting-head format—made famous by CNN's "Crossfire" and later by Fox News shows like "The O'Reilly Factor" and "Hannity and Colmes"—for their legal affairs shows. Today, viewers can watch legal pundits yell at one another as they debate guilt and innocence, life and death, on any number of programs—from CNN's "Larry King Live" to Fox News' "On the Record with Greta Van Susteren" to MSNBC's "The Abrams Report." And, most prominently, they can tune into Court TV, where Grace and a retinue of other shouting heads bloviate all day long. "Court TV has taken what's happened in the political arena with Fox News and extended that to the legal arena," says Mark Geragos, Scott Peterson's defense attorney, who himself often appears on the legal shout-fests. "It's the Fox-ification of the legal arena. And it's a significant problem."

The problem, according to the standard critique of legal shouting-head shows, is one felt most acutely in the courtroom—where intense media speculation can make it difficult for a defendant to enjoy the presumption of innocence and receive a fair trial. But the criminal justice system, with its strict rules and myriad procedural safeguards, has actually done a good job of insulating celebrity trials from the noxious effects of shouting-head shows. Instead, the more serious threat posed by these shows exists outside the cloistered world of the courtroom, in the harder-to-govern court of public opinion. There, where the only procedural safeguards are those that the press chooses to place on itself, defendants seldom enjoy any real presumption of innocence; and their trials—on Court TV, CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC—are anything but fair. Indeed, thanks to Grace and her fellow shouting heads, the court of public opinion is becoming an increasingly hostile venue—for celebrity and noncelebrity defendants alike.

For such a firebrand, Nancy Grace cuts a surprisingly diminutive figure. She is a petite woman with frosted blonde bangs that point down toward brown eyes and a pert nose. In moments of repose, her face has a tranquil, almost delicate quality. But, when she gets agitated, as she often does when debating defense lawyers on television, her eyes widen and her nostrils flare, so that she takes on the look of a heavily made-up cartoon bull. When I visited Grace at Court TV's headquarters in New York not long ago, she was wearing her agitated face. She had just moved into a corner office—no doubt part of Court TV's efforts to keep her from completely decamping to CNN—and was upset that one of her lucky charms, an American flag she was given on September 11, hadn't made the move with her. Fortunately, the rest of her office's accoutrements had been successfully transferred—including plaques from various civic organizations, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III*, *Dynamics of Basketball* (which helped her prepare for the Kobe Bryant rape trial), and, most importantly, a large, framed photograph of a young man with longish brown hair.

The picture is of Keith Griffin, to whom Grace was engaged 25 years ago. The two met as students at Valdosta State University in Georgia, where he was on a baseball scholarship and she was majoring in English. After graduation, they planned to marry. But, in the summer of 1980, Griffin was murdered during a mugging that netted his assailant all of $30. His death became the seminal event of Grace's life. She subsequently learned that the man who murdered Griffin had been on parole, and she could not fathom how the criminal justice system had let him out on the streets. "There was nobody there for victims," she told me, recalling how bewildered and alone she felt as she sat in the courtroom watching the murder trial. "Victims didn't have a voice in our judicial system." Grace, who has remained single to this day, decided to be someone who would give them a voice. She abandoned her ambition of becoming an English teacher and set her sights on a legal career. After attending law school at Mercer University in her hometown of Macon, Georgia, she moved to Atlanta and, in 1987, joined the Fulton County District Attorney's office.

Grace proved to be a passionate advocate for the state and formed unusually close relationships with the people she called "my victims," or, if her victims were no longer alive, with their families. "She's my best friend," the mother of one murder victim once said of Grace. Her intense emotional investment certainly led to good results in the courtroom: She compiled a perfect record in the nearly 100 violent felonies she brought to trial. The Atlanta press dubbed her "Amazin' Grace."

The Atlanta defense bar, however, was not so enamored. Defense lawyers accused her of intimidating witnesses and withholding evidence. They also lambasted her for her behavior in the courtroom, which blended the sacred (the Atlanta defense lawyer Jack Martin says Grace would ostentatiously thumb through a Bible while the defense was cross-examining one of her witnesses) with the profane (another Atlanta attorney, Dennis Scheib, complains that she would wear low-cut blouses and provocatively lean over into the jury box). "You needed three lawyers to try a case with Nancy Grace—two to watch her and one to argue the case," says Scheib, who represented a man Grace successfully prosecuted for murder in 1996. Grace vehemently denies all of these charges, dismissing such complaints as "sour grapes" from the very people she repeatedly bested in the courtroom. But, in at least two instances, the Georgia Supreme Court also took issue with her prosecutorial tactics. In 1994, the Court overturned a drug-dealing conviction she had won on the grounds that she improperly inflamed the jury by mentioning in her closing arguments an unrelated triple homicide and a serial rape case. And, in 1997, the Court reversed a murder and arson conviction Grace had secured, chastising her for "an extensive pattern

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of inappropriate and, in some cases, illegal conduct," including her decision to allow a CNN camera crew to film her inside the defendant's house, to which she had gained entry through a search warrant.

Still, Grace's colorful career as a prosecutor made an impression on Brill. His network had covered several of Grace's trials, and, after he watched her debate Johnnie Cochran at a Court TV–sponsored symposium in 1996, he persuaded her to leave the courtroom and move to New York to do a show with the former O.J. Simpson attorney. "Cochran & Grace" turned out to be a flop and was canceled after only a few months. But Grace stayed at Court TV, and, after Brill sold the network, she found her niche. Under Brill, Court TV took pains to cover a wide range of trials so as to portray the full spectrum of the judicial system—one day focusing on the case of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, another day highlighting the antitrust suit against the Ivy League for coordinating financial aid decisions. But the network's new management, in a bid for higher ratings, has chosen to offer its viewers a steady diet of cases revolving around murder and mayhem—just the type of cases that lend themselves to Grace's black-and-white worldview. What's more, Court TV's new bosses have freed up Grace to reveal more of her own story to viewers. Where Brill had not allowed her to talk on the air about her fiancé's murder—"You wouldn't expect Walter Cronkite to be covering a hurricane and mention that his cousin had been killed in one," explains Brill—Grace now routinely mentions her own status as a crime victim. "She's a victims' rights activist in the position of an anchor," says Court TV's current CEO, Henry Schleiff, "and I have no problem with that."

Neither, it seems, does her audience. Viewers of Grace's "Closing Arguments" have increased 50 percent over the past year, and Larry King's ratings tend to go up when Grace is one of his guests. Victims' rights groups, meanwhile, invite Grace to speak at their gatherings and hail her as an invaluable ally. "She has a lot of courage, she speaks out, she tells the truth, and the way that she handles those defense attorneys, she catches them at their games," says Harriet Salarno, the founder of Crime Victims United of California. But, for all her adoring fans, Grace's act rubs some people the wrong way—and not only the defense attorneys she battles on television. Grace says she gets more hate mail than any other anchor at Court TV. And even the normally avuncular King often appears rankled by his regular guest and possible successor. During his show's coverage of the Peterson case, King would often interrupt Grace to remind her that the man she was excoriating had not yet been proved guilty of anything. "Nancy," he complained on one show, "the system is presumption of innocence. You are not presuming innocence." As King once told *The New York Observer*, Grace believes that, "if you're accused, you did it." Says one person close to King: "He despises her. She's foisted upon him." (King's press representative at CNN did not return calls for this story.)

On the air, Grace bristles when others accuse her of believing that arrest is tantamount to guilt. While she's always polite to King—for whom she claims great affection—she has barked at her fellow panelists, "This is not a time for personal attacks. We're talking about this trial." When I pressed Grace on her seemingly unswerving faith in the guilt of the accused in the trials she covers, she answered me with the same defensive hostility she uses with her on-air debate partners. "I sense you believe that I think if anybody's arrested or suspected they should go to jail for life. I don't think that. What accomplishment is it to send the wrong person to the penitentiary if the right person walks free?" She explained that, when she goes on television and pronounces someone guilty before that person has actually been convicted, she's only stating the obvious. "You don't think Peterson did it? Hell yeah, he did it," she said. "What do you want me to do, pretend on TV that he didn't do it? ... The cases I'm sure about I feel very confident about."

Alas, sometimes her confidence is misplaced. In 2001, Grace was outspoken in her suspicion that California Representative Gary Condit played a role in the disappearance and murder of Chandra Levy. But Condit was never charged, and, although the Levy case remains unsolved, Washington, D.C., police long ago ruled out Condit as a suspect. The next summer, when the kidnapping of twelve-year-old Utah girl Elizabeth Smart was the case du jour, Grace pounced on one of the police's initial suspects, the Smart family's handyman, Richard Ricci. Grace all but proclaimed Ricci's guilt in the kidnapping after Salt Lake City police arrested him for stealing jewelry from the Smart house. Ricci was eventually exonerated of kidnapping Smart—when she was found in March 2003 and a couple was charged in her abduction—but only after he had died in prison of a brain hemorrhage. King later asked Grace if she felt guilty about "all the whacks we took at Mr. Ricci" on his show. "No, I don't," she replied. "I'm not going on a guilt trip, and I'm not letting you take the police with me on a guilt trip."

On the day I visited Grace, the conviction of another person whose guilt she had loudly proclaimed, Andrea Yates, had come into question. Just that morning, a Texas appeals court reversed Yates's conviction of capital murder for drowning three of her children in a bathtub, and Grace was getting ready to devote most of that afternoon's "Closing Arguments" to this development. That Yates had killed her children was not in dispute. But, during her 2002 trial, her attorneys argued that she was insane when she drowned them. The state contended that Yates knew right from wrong and therefore was not legally insane—and Grace, in her commentary on the case, had vociferously seconded that view. The reversal was ordered on the grounds that an expert witness for the prosecution had falsely testified that he had consulted on an episode of the TV show "Law & Order" that depicted a mother who drowned her children in a bathtub and was found not guilty by reason of insanity. The witness claimed, and the prosecutor later reiterated

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in his closing argument, that the episode was broadcast shortly before Yates, who regularly watched "Law & Order," drowned her own children. As it turned out, no such episode of "Law & Order" exists.

Grace was not happy about the reversal. "Defense attorneys are dancing up and down the halls of the courthouse today," she told her viewers. She believed the false testimony was insufficient grounds for such a decision. But, on her show that afternoon, Grace was in the minority. Not only did the chorus of defense attorneys she had on as her regular sparring partners agree with the court's decision, even her usual allies—another former prosecutor and Court TV anchor named Lisa Bloom and a clinical social worker named Lauren Howard—thought the court was right to reverse Yates's conviction. "Is there anyone to take the other position?" Grace beseeched her producer during a commercial break. "I can't take on eight people and be the moderator." The producer quickly found another shouting head to argue Grace's side, but, by the end of the show, Grace herself no longer seemed so sure that the reversal was wrong. "I'm still on the fence on this one," she said almost apologetically.

After the show, Grace told me that she would read the trial transcript that night and let her viewers know where she stood. But Grace never again returned to the topic of Yates on her show. And, when I talked to her a few weeks later, after she said she had finally read the case materials, she reverted to her original position. "I know the reversal may be a popular opinion, and, not knowing the truth, I was ready to abandon my original view and support the reversal, as you saw on the air. But lady justice is blind."

To some, the Yates reversal was a defining moment—an instance where a fictional TV show that claims to be "ripped from the headlines" made headlines of its own by changing the outcome of a real-life case. But, for the most part, that sort of media interference with an actual trial is rare, thanks to the procedural safeguards courts have at their disposal. If a case has received an undue amount of publicity in one geographic area, for instance, its venue can be changed. And, before a trial begins, potential jurors are always screened through a process known as voir dire, during which they can be eliminated from the jury pool for any number of reasons: One of the most common and almost always automatic disqualifiers is excessive prior knowledge of the case in question. Then, once a jury is seated, a judge can sequester it and order it not to follow any news coverage about that case; if a juror breaks that rule, he or she can be removed from the panel. "The traditional procedural filters," says Ronald Goldfarb, a Washington lawyer and the author of two books about television and the courts, "have worked in the past, and they work today at getting people a fair trial."

But, outside the judicial system, in the court of public opinion—where the logic of television, as opposed to the logic of the law, reigns—fair trials can be all but impossible. Although legal shout-fests are, by definition, debate programs on which both sides are always represented, the side arguing guilt enjoys an inherent advantage. "The logic of television is a logic of emotion," says Richard Sherwin, a professor at New York Law School and the author of *When Law Goes Pop: The Vanishing Line between Law and Popular Culture*. "Any abstract idea or principle, like the presumption of innocence, is at a real disadvantage in a medium that's hot, that feeds off the emotion of the anchor-person's persona." So, when Nancy Grace invokes her own status as a crime victim while arguing the guilt of that episode's celebrity defendant, the inevitable "high-profile defense attorney" she's debating is rendered almost powerless. Unless that lawyer was once jailed for a crime he didn't commit, what personal experience can he invoke to match hers?

The end result of such an imbalance is a public that is increasingly pro-prosecution and anti-defense. (It is notable that the heroic lawyers of popular culture were once Atticus Finch and Perry Mason, who defended the rights of the unjustly accused, while today they are attorneys like "Law & Order" 's Jack McCoy, who goes after the always-guilty bad guys.) And, as those attitudes take root, broad support for fundamental tenets of our legal system—such as the presumption of innocence—are gradually eroded so that, in the minds of many, arrest eventually becomes tantamount to guilt. The legal shout-fests, says Sherwin, "create a habit of mind that almost seems to generate instant justice. That's what TV shows are all about: You get instant emotional response, instant clarity, instant judgment. That's inconsistent with the frame of mind of deliberation that's necessary for real justice."

Nancy Grace is untroubled by these sorts of concerns. As she sees it, if she enjoys an inherent advantage on television, where emotion carries the day, then that only serves to counter the advantage defendants enjoy in the courtroom. "Victims are unheard," she said in her office, as she gazed into a compact mirror and powdered her nose, getting ready to go on the air. "Defendants are heard, I pay for them to be heard. My parents living on a retirement pension after forty-five years on the railroad, they're paying for violent offenders to have lawyers for free, investigators for free, appeals for free. That's fine, I'm all for it. I want it that way. They are heard. They're more than heard." Besides, she maintained, this culture of instant justice and celebrity trials is hardly a recent development. "Think back to the Salem witch trials," she said. "Trials have always been a source of controversy. ... Trials will always be a spectator sport."

The crux of the matter, Grace contended, striking a rare note of agreement with many of her critics, is that the spectator-sport component be kept outside the actual courtroom. Getting up from her chair and slipping on a green blazer, she began making her way toward the studio. "It's the duty of the judge and the lawyers to make sure that does not penetrate to the jury," she said. "Who cares what everybody else thinks?" ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Linkages

ONE FUNCTION THAT BRINGS people to films is recognition. Especially during contemporary pictures, we run checklists as we watch: Yes, that's exactly what my uncle said when my aunt died, etc. Beyond these small ingratiating stings lie greater matters: we are often linked with the screen in taunting uncertainties and grim certainties. Out of all these recognitions, petty and huge, a bond develops—something like a co-authorship of the picture.

These sorts of film experiences recurred and recurred as I watched **THE BEST OF YOUTH.** There was plenty of time for them to recur because this Italian film runs six hours. It was made for telecast in four ninety-minute installments and is being shown here in theaters—first at the Film Forum in New York—in two three-hour parts. Principally the story is about two Roman brothers who finish their university work in 1966; we follow their subsequent encounters, personal, professional, political (including the Red Brigade), up to 2003. Oddly enough, to an American viewer, much in the larger themes seems close, while much of the daily detail was in some degree remote. But I kept remembering that the film's first audience knew most of what was intriguing to me; they must have been in some measure lapped in recognitions. Every film that is imported or exported is thus, in effect, two films, the domestic one and its foreign counterpart.

Like some wines, *The Best of Youth* travels well. From its earliest moments the film is intelligently *seen*. The director, Marco Tullio Giordana, has been making films for twenty years—though I don't know his previous work—and from the start we are in the hands of a man impatient with visual clichés and equally impatient with bizarre stunts. He presents every shot with nothing but the intent to intensify life as it is being lived, not as a cinematic display, and thus he is adding to cinema. His camera moves to embody flow, not to startle us. When a shot is deep, it is meant to include place or atmosphere in the intrinsics of the scene. Giordana's work is masterly, and the alert editing by Roberto Missiroli helps to support this mastery.

THE BEST OF YOUTH
(Miramax)

IMAGINARY HEROES
(Sony Pictures Classics)

The cast is of course big. The only name known to me is Adriana Asti, who plays the mother of the brothers. She has been on screen for half a century (in her long dossier is one of Susan Sontag's films, *Duet for Cannibals*), and here she gives us surety and confidence. The two brothers are done by exceptional young actors. Alessio Boni plays Matteo, the brother who forsakes his literary studies and goes into the hardest of worlds around him almost as a refuge. Boni, attractive in any case, knows how to convince us of his character's secrets. Luigi Lo Cascio is the other brother, Nicola, who becomes a psychiatrist. Lo Cascio, who has already played Hamlet in Italy, is an actor of resource and warmth and range. (I note that both these young men are products of the same theater school, the National Drama Academy Silvio D'Amico.)

The screenplay is by Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli, who have often collaborated before. (Among their scripts is the unforgettable *Stolen Children*, directed by Gianni Amelio.) Petraglia and Rulli are so focused on character and relevance that their occasional waverings make us all the more uneasy. Throughout the film a schizophrenic young woman re-appears, resident in various hospitals. She is unrelated to Nicola's practice or any other aspect of the picture; she is little more than a signet of the film's concern with social candor.

Also, the last half hour or so of the picture is overtly busy with tidying up all the strands of the story. We can almost see the authors making sure that they have left nothing untended. This last point reminds me of Irving Howe. In 1980, after he had seen R.W. Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*—which runs 931 minutes, almost three times as long as *The Best of Youth*—I asked him how he had liked it. Howe said, "Except for the last hour and a half, it's a masterpiece." As it happens, I agreed. Giordana's film is not of the Fassbinder dimensions either in length or in quality, even if it had an improved last section. Still, its discernment and intent and flavor are exceptional. I don't see enough American television films to make comparisons: I just hope that our work is sometimes equivalent.

The recognition factor operates prominently in **IMAGINARY HEROES.** This American film relies heavily on clicks of familiarity at different levels as it moves along. We know in advance about American family difficulties with adolescents, about high school drinking, about drugging, about parental troubles that match the children's. The conventional suburban landscape is by now a ready-made setting for unconventional behavior.

The best aspect of Dan Harris's screenplay is that he knew his material was basically familiar, that he was nonetheless moved by it, and that he was aware that he had to justify a revisit. The result is almost like a film we have seen before but don't mind seeing again. The dialogue is generally fresh, the relationships ring true. Harris also directed, and his directing parallels his writing. Visually there is little that is extraordinary, but his work with his actors, who were apparently impressed with his sincerity, earned the respect of the veterans and led the youngsters to completion.

The film is chiefly concerned with the aftereffects of a family tragedy. Jeff Daniels plays the father of the adolescent protagonist and is able to sink into

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the cave of his numbness with touching quiet. Sigourney Weaver, as his wife, has a more complex role, more questing, vulnerable, saddened; Weaver has thought out her character intelligently and fulfills it with spirit and color.

Their son, the chief adolescent of the story, is Emile Hirsch, whose performance makes us wish we could do something for the youth he is playing. Hirsch, born in 1985, can't be called a child actor like some youngsters lately discussed here. He is knowledgeable and moderately skillful, and he understands the place of the son in his home, his school, his town, his society. Without sparkling virtuosity, his performance is still vivid enough to help hold the picture together and to verify the recognitions, large and small, that flow through it. ■

James Wood

The Moral Baby

WODEHOUSE: A LIFE
By Robert McCrum
(W. W. Norton, 530 pp., $27.95)

I.

DELIBERATELY UNSERIOUS writers are very rare in literature; even most children's books are dark with agenda. Sheer play is much rarer than great seriousness, for nonsense demands from most of us an unlearning of adult lessons, a return to childhood—which anyway, being a return, lacks childhood's innocent originality. P. G. Wodehouse, who was always described by those who knew him best as an arrested schoolboy, must be the gentlest, most playful comedian in the English novel. (Even Beerbohm had his barbs.) His innocence is rare; but even rarer is the combination in his books of muscleless play and serious, intensely controlled literary talent.

Bertie Wooster, in *Joy in the Morning* (1947), one of the funniest of the Jeeves and Wooster novels, consoles his friend Boko Fittleworth, who has just been roundly abused by his fiancée: "You can't go by what a girl says, when she's giving you the devil for making a chump of yourself. It's like Shakespeare. Sounds well, but doesn't mean anything." It is a marvelous crack, and consistent with Bertie's expensively educated idiocy; but it is also interestingly self-descriptive. For it is Wodehouse's own prose that is like a Shakespeare without sense. It doesn't mean anything, but it sounds superb.

The Shakespearean atmosphere flows not just from the Arden-like suspension of worldly rules, and the habit the novels have of falling into the happy closure of marriages (*Love's Labours Lost* was Wodehouse's favorite play); it has above all to do with Wodehouse's verbal abundance, the joyful sense that language naturally exceeds reality as grass exceeds a verge, and that the referent can be almost condescendingly described and redescribed, and thus comically smothered in re-description. Shakespeare is full of this, not only in the comedies. In *King Lear*, Kent viciously abuses Oswald the steward, partly for the fun of rolling around a variety of playful insults ("an eater of broken meats, a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave"), ending with "Thou whoreson Z, thou unnecessary letter."

Unnecessary letter, indeed: all the fun in Wodehouse has to do with unnecessary letters, with the non-necessity of language. Take, for instance, Wodehouse's many words for the head: the onion, the brain ("the brain seemed to be tottering on its throne"), the coconut ("I was still massaging the coconut"), the lemon ("I shook the lemon"), the bean ("No situation is beyond Jeeves.... In fact I believe something is fermenting now inside that spacious bean"), the lozenge ("He kept on oscillating the lozenge"). Or the several verbs devoted to exits and entries: Jeeves never enters the room, he shimmers or floats or filters into a room. Sometimes he leaves a room by "oiling off"; someone else is described as having "biffed off." A young woman might be a "pancake," a "blister," or "an attractive young prune." A hat might be a "lid," and a face a "map" ("a dazed expression on the map"). A beard is a "fungus" ("he was still fumbling at the fungus"). Bertie's morning tea, faithfully brought to his bedside by Jeeves, is numerously re-described, perhaps most musically as "the vital oolong." We may also find such words as "bobbish," "snurge," "bunce," and "dekko." (One sees Wodehouse's influence on a contemporary comic writer such as Martin Amis, who delights in the creation of alternative languages—"sock" for pad or apartment, "rug" for hair; a haircut in *Money* is a "rug rethink." All this is essentially Wodehousian.)

At times the language is quite capable of floating away from its tethers and becoming a fantastic music, made up of Edwardian slang, Wodehouse's own neologisms, and the clichés of popular fiction. An antique colloquialism such as "apple sauce" (nonsense, balderdash) gets a Wodehousian lift from being paired, absurdly, with "unbalanced": "To Tuppy's theory that some insinuating bird had stolen the girl's heart from him at Cannes I had given, as I have indicated, little credence, considering it the mere unbalanced apple sauce of a bereaved man." Or one of my favorites, the menacing fascist Sir Roderick Spode having been finally vanquished: "Well, Spode, *qua* menace, is a spent egg," says Bertie Wooster. Such pairings are so funny because they take a phrase like "apple sauce" out of its dead metaphoricity and remind us of its ridiculous facticity: there's apple sauce (or egg) in that sentence! But at the same time Wodehouse insists on using the apple sauce or the egg as if it were still colloquial dead metaphor, with a clubman's dumb panache. So the prose is expert at looking two ways at once: unwinkingly at its characters (this is the kind of mad stuff Bertie would say) and winkingly at us (just enjoy the kind of mad stuff Bertie says).

A world in which language, by being so abundant, has gone beyond necessity, has itself been released from necessity into irresponsibility, into a kind of delirious freedom. The delicious release felt by all readers of Wodehouse is a verbal release, into and out of language (or at least out of language as we ordinarily know it). The words rustle like free money: how nice it is to have more than we know what to do with. And Wodehouse's fiction was, of course, supremely commercial: the comic series (Ukridge, Jeeves and Wooster, Bland-

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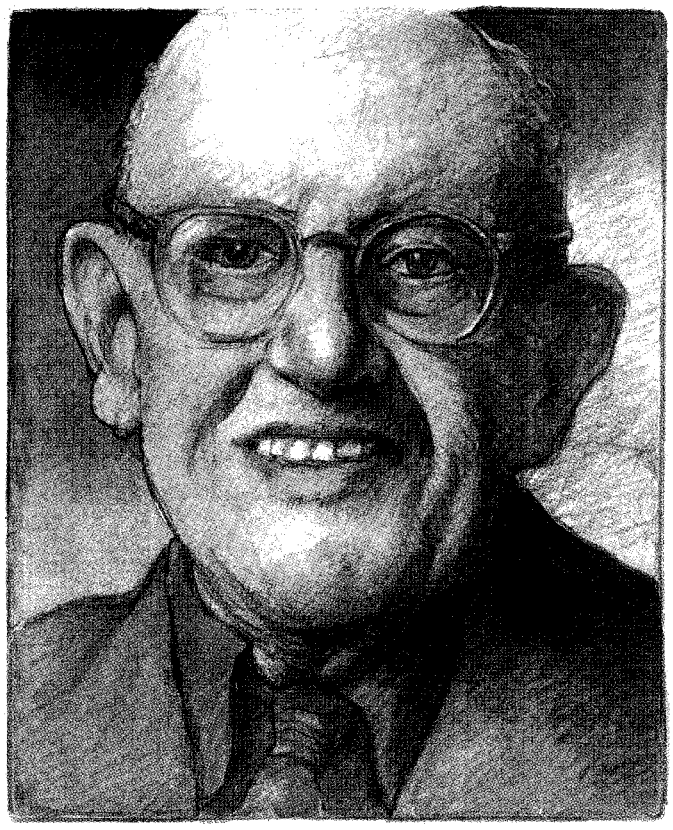
ings) were essentially franchises, each novel promising its merry successor, and each in turn casting a fond eye on its predecessor. The writer who had such linguistic riches also had a need to spend them: he wrote at least ninety books in his lifetime.

II.

PELHAM GRENVILLE WODEHOUSE was born, in 1881, into the minor branch of a grand family tree. Wodehouses had been knights and landowners in Norfolk as far back as the fifteenth century. But Wodehouse's father was merely an imperial civil servant, a magistrate in Hong Kong, and there seems to have been enough money to send the young Wodehouse to private school but not enough to send him to Oxford or Cambridge. The baby fell into the chilly domestic routines of late empire. (Kipling and Orwell had not dissimilar upbringings.) Left at the age of two with a nanny in Bath, he did not see his parents for another three years. Robert McCrum reckons that Wodehouse saw his mother and father "for barely six months between the ages of three and fifteen." His father was warm but distant; his mother cold, a stranger. McCrum intelligently analyzes this extraordinary deprivation, seeing it as the key to Wodehouse's lifelong combination of detachment and innocence. As a boy he learned to be on his own, to take succor from books and from walking. In adult life, he would be a fanatically hard worker, a writer who seemed to long only to get back to the desk, one whose ideal was a relentless pattern of writing and exercise.

Boarding school was his great refuge. Unlike, say, Orwell, who hated his school days, Wodehouse melted into Dulwich College, an ancient foundation in what was then a rustic suburb of south London. He was a fine footballer, cricketer, and boxer, and an excellent classicist, able to "write Latin and Greek as rapidly as he wrote English." Orwell, in a famous essay, would accuse Wodehouse of being fixated on his old school, and it does seem that Wodehouse never grew out of his gray short trousers. He maintained an unhealthy interest, well into middle age, in the fortunes of his old school teams, taking the train from central London to cheer them on from the sidelines of the school playing fields (and often walking the many miles back to town). McCrum quotes him writing to an old friend in 1946: "Isn't it odd, when one ought to be worrying about the state of the world and one's troubles generally, that the only thing I can think of nowadays is that Dulwich looks like winning all its school matches and surpassing the 1909 record."



P. G. Wodehouse by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

McCrum rightly dwells on what we might now describe as a near-autism in Wodehouse. Biography seems to explain both the fantasy of the work (set in a world largely removed from contemporary reality) and the great disaster of the life, the broadcasts Wodehouse would give from Berlin during World War II. The closed community of the boarding school provided the warm imprisonment that family had never offered. The escape of comedy, and particularly of light fiction, seems to have been deeply necessary to Wodehouse. It deflected reality; it was a garden in a menacing city.

Wodehouse was always boyish, hairless, and oddly sexless. He and his wife maintained separate bedrooms; he did not father children. From his early teens onward he consumed large amounts of popular fiction and entertainment. The highlight of his month, McCrum reports, was "the arrival at the West Dulwich station bookstall of the latest edition of the *Strand*, with the new Conan Doyle serial." He loved Gilbert and Sullivan: *Patience* made him "absolutely drunk with ecstasy, I thought it the finest thing that could possibly be done." Years later he would admit that he would rather have written *Oklahoma!* than *Hamlet*.

Still, the biographical explanation leaves open a more literary question: why did an intelligent and sensitive teenager, precociously talented at writing, want to emulate popular entertainers such as G. A. Henty and H. Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle, and not major writers such as Conrad or James or George Eliot? In what spirit did he read serious writers? The serious pursuit of the unserious is one of the strangest elements of Wodehouse's life, and McCrum is not especially helpful in this regard. We hardly ever hear of Wodehouse reading anything except trash. As a young man, chained to his desk, writing squibs and light verse, he would read, for relaxation, "anything that came along," writes his biographer, without telling us what that was. Later we learn that in 1921 he read a first novel called *What Next?* about a clever butler by a writer called Denis Mackail, who later became a friend. In 1940, he took Shakespeare's *Collected Works* and a volume of Tennyson to the German internment camp. As an old man he might read Dick Francis or Rex Stout or Ngaio Marsh. And that is it.

It would be interesting to have discovered—if such a record exists—whether Wodehouse ever read serious fiction as an adult, and if so, what he thought of it.

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McCrum, having provided the biographical explanation, rather assumes that it was natural for Wodehouse to fall into the kind of writing that he started doing professionally at the age of twenty. But of course it was highly unnatural. The swerve away from literary seriousness, for a talented young man, is what puzzles here.

Not, of course, that one would want Wodehouse to be any different than he is. Rather one of him than a thousand J.D. Scotts or Alec Waughs or Edward Upwards, or all the other now forgotten "serious" novelists of the age. But there are plenty of writers with painful and deprived backgrounds who found refuge not in escapism but in truth—especially in the tragicomic, a form of writing in which pathos and comedy sharpen each other's nibs: Italo Svevo comes to mind. Chekhov had a painful childhood and started his career, like Wodehouse, writing squibs and funny pieces for the papers.

TWO OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF genius came easily to Wodehouse: speed and labor. "The story of these years is work, work and more work," writes McCrum at one point; but it could be said of any moment in Wodehouse's life. From 1900 to 1908 he kept a precise record of monthly earnings, in which, thanks to McCrum, we can witness the recompense for the hundreds of stories, verses, and articles written for such publications as *Tit-Bits* (Leopold Bloom's lavatory reading, it will be remembered), *The Globe and Traveller*, *Punch*, the *Public School Magazine*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. He could write as many as forty thousand words of comic fiction in two weeks. Sixty-four pages of *Thank You, Jeeves* were dispatched in just seventeen days.

By 1903, Woodhouse was earning more than £200 a year, but it was America, which he began visiting regularly in 1903, that would make him a very rich man. McCrum is a diligent and shrewd host as he steers his account through Wodehouse's early years in America and his great success with musicals. His biography satisfies those peckish for fact—it jingles with dollar signs—without bloating its readers on detail. The information about Wodehouse's collaborations with Jerome Kern, Guy Bolton, Cole Porter, and the Gershwins is interesting, even for a reader left frigid by musicals. Wodehouse, unlike most lyricists, was happy for the composer (usually Kern) to write a melody first and then trim his words to fit. Blockbusters such as *Oh, Boy!, Oh, Kay!,* and *Anything Goes* made him famous. By the late 1930s, he could sell a novel for serialization to *The Saturday Evening Post* for $40,000. There were also two rather sour sojourns in Hollywood; like every other talented writer of his era, it seems, Wodehouse maundered over disappointing scripts.

The 1930s was Wodehouse's great decade. He would never be as loved, as rich, as happy, or as good a writer again. Above all, these were the years when he wrote the most sparkling of the Jeeves and Wooster books, a series inaugurated in 1916 in the pages of *The Saturday Evening Post*. *Right Ho, Jeeves*, which appeared in 1934, contains the intricate nonsense of Gussie Fink-Nottle and his engagement to the drippy Madeline Bassett, and Gussie's drunken prize-giving address to the pupils of Market Snodsbury Grammar School. We also meet the formidable but kindly Aunt Dahlia, the great exception to Wodehouse's gen-

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eral rule, laid down in *The Code of The Woosters*: "It is no use telling me that there are bad aunts and good aunts. At the core, they are all alike. Sooner or later, out pops the cloven hoof." And there is Aunt Dahlia's brilliant French cook Anatole, the master of gastronomy, famed throughout the shires for such morsels as *nonnettes de poulet Agnès Sorel* and *ris de veau à la financière*. The book is very funny throughout, but it rises to something truly marvelous when Bertie discourses on the unconscious. He reflects that sleeping on a problem often produces results:

> The nibs who study these matters claim, I believe, that this has got something to do with the subconscious mind, and very possibly they may be right. I wouldn't have said off-hand that I had a subconscious mind, but I suppose I must without knowing it, and no doubt it was there, sweating away diligently at the old stand, all the while the corporeal Wooster was getting his eight hours.

The prospect of Bertie grudgingly yet flippantly (how wonderful that "off-hand" is!) owning up to the possession of a subconscious has a subtlety, and an air of witty paradox, somewhat uncharacteristic of Wodehouse's humor. It suggests what his writing might have been—in another life, of course—had he been interested in human beings. Svevo would make this very paradox the engine of *The Confessions of Zeno*, a novel both funny and very painful (in which Zeno, having been diagnosed by his analyst as suffering from the Oedipus complex, hotly denies it, adding that "the surest proof that I never had the disease is that I've not been cured of it").

THE CODE OF THE WOOSTERS, perhaps an even funnier book than its predecessor, appeared in 1938, and by the summer of 1940 Wodehouse had completed all but the last five chapters of *Joy in the Morning*, when the Germans interrupted his daily routine by arriving at his door in Le Touquet, the French seaside town where he and his wife lived. (That book was completed in Nazi Germany, astoundingly, and published after the war, in 1947.) *The Code of the Woosters* sends Bertie and Jeeves to Totleigh Towers, in Totleigh-in-the-Wold, the home of the fearful Sir Watkyn Bassett. Also in residence are Gussie Fink-Nottle (again), the Reverend H. P. (Stinker) Pinker, Sir Roderick Spode, and the heartless young woman Stiffy Byng, a "pancake" whose steely behavior elicits from Bertie the following biblical allusion and fabulous general denunciation of all females: "You pull off the rawest stuff without a pang. You pride yourselves on it. Look at Jael, the wife of Heber.... Dug spikes into the guest's coconut while he was asleep, and then went swanking around the place like a Girl Guide. No wonder they say, 'Oh woman, woman!'"

It is the novel in which we learn that Sir Roderick Spode, the leader of the Saviours of Britain, "a Fascist organization better known as the Black Shorts" (modeled on the fascist Sir Oswald Mosley), has a dirty secret. Jeeves, through his butlering connections, discovers that Sir Roderick is the proprietor of Eulalie Soeurs, a manufacturer of women's underwear. All Bertie will have to do to bring Spode down will be to say, "Spode, I know all about Eulalie." The single word will shrivel him. At the critical moment Bertie begins his sentence—and cannot complete it, having forgotten the crucial word: "Spode, I know all about...." In the end, Spode is indeed brought low, because Bertie does finally remember "Eulalie." And then "Spode, *qua* menace, is a spent egg." (The sentence bears repeating.)

THESE NOVELS ARE FRANCHISES, self-syndications, in which the writer returns to surefire techniques and gags, having tested them out on his devoted audience. The first and most important strategy is reliably unreliable narration. Bertie Wooster narrates these books, and we can rely on him to know less than we do. A working definition of the difference between the safety of light humor and the more perilous nature of the tragicomic might revolve around the difference between reliably unreliable narration and unreliably unreliable narration. Svevo's Zeno and Nabokov's Humbert are unreliably unreliable narrators: we are not entirely sure when they are failing to know themselves, not entirely sure when they are deceiving themselves. Their narration is a shifting sand. Bertie is reliably unreliable because we know that he is not very bright and we can see when he is being not very bright, but Bertie does not know it himself; indeed he thinks himself frightfully bright—and Wodehouse gaily flags these little dikes, these shallow abysses.

We are in on the joke every time; the authorial contract is with the reader, and there is no fine aporetic print. Thus one of the funniest running jokes is that Bertie imagines himself to be the equal of Jeeves, when everyone else around knows this to be untrue. *Right Ho, Jeeves* opens with Bertie and Jeeves squabbling about a white mess jacket that Bertie acquired in Cannes. Jeeves considers it unsuitable for English life.

> "I am convinced that you will eventually learn to love this mess jacket, Jeeves."
>
> "I fear not, sir."

Bertie insists that he will wear it, and confides thus to the reader: "another of those unfortunate clashes of will between two strong men ... Bertram, unless he remembered his fighting ancestors and stood up for his rights, was about to be put upon."

But we know that Jeeves will get his way, as he always does. *The Code of the Woosters* opens similarly, with the pair arguing about a cruise around the world. Jeeves is keen to go on it, and Bertie is dead against: "I suppose that when two men of iron will live in close association with one another, there are bound to be occasional clashes." The novel ends with the revelation that Jeeves has already bought the tickets, so sure is he of final victory over his master. The iron will is made of rubber, and we know this in advance. This is the cozy pleasure of the recognition of return.

WODEHOUSE IS MARVELOUS at exploiting the comedy in the master-servant relationship, especially the table-turning of servant usurping master, a device already vividly present in *Don Quixote*, in which Sancho Panza emerges as far wiser than his muddle-headed, if inspired, master. Even Bertie, for all his misplaced self-conceit, reveres Jeeves's intelligence, and makes much of his oversize brain—"that spacious bean"—and the fact that he eats fish to augment his IQ ("it's the phosphorus, you know"). All the Jeeves and Wooster novels abound in mangled allusions—classical, biblical, and literary. Wooster always messes them—he is drawing on the gentleman's battered private-school kitty—and Jeeves cleans them; there is

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no bottom to Jeeves's knowledge.

Wodehouse has some of his best fun when Bertie seems determined to ascribe to Jeeves's brilliant invention very famous quotations: "I remember Jeeves saying on one occasion—I forget how the subject had arisen—he may simply have thrown the observation out, as he does sometimes, for me to take or leave—that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." At least three of the novels recycle Shakespeare's lines about letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would," "like the poor cat i'the adage." Whenever Jeeves comes out with this, Bertie is awestruck: "It beats me how you think up these things." Of course, when it comes to Shakespeare, Bertie has some strange notions: "Bacon, as you no doubt remember, wrote Shakespeare's stuff for him, and then, possibly because he owed the latter money or it may be from sheer good nature, allowed him to take the credit for it." And *Joy in the Morning* has a scene in which Bertie, having squabbled with Jeeves over the latter's desire to go fishing in the country, feels magnanimous and offers to buy him a book. What would he like?

> "Well, sir, there has recently been published a new and authoritatively annotated edition of the works of the philosopher Spinoza. . . ."
>
> "You shall have it. . . .You're sure you've got the name right? Spinoza?"
>
> "Yes, sir."
>
> "It doesn't sound probable, but no doubt you know best. Spinoza, eh? Is he the Book Society's Choice of the Month?"
>
> "I believe not, sir."

Evelyn Waugh wrote that a writer who has two or three brilliant similes on every page must be called a master. It is above all in simile and metaphor that Wodehouse is peerless. His similes function at various levels. Often they are great similes in the conventional literary sense, because they charge upon a new association or likeness, and capture a picture for us: the beard that is described as resembling a "fungus," for instance. Or: "She entered now with a slow and dragging step like a Volga boatman." Or: "The spine, and I do not attempt to conceal the fact, had become soluble in the last degree." Or: "The acrid smell of burnt poetry." Or: "He spun round with a sort of guilty bound, like an adagio dancer surprised while watering the cat's milk." Or: "She looked like an aunt who has just bitten into a bad oyster."

But the more usual Wodehousian simile is an exaggeration, a kind of parody of the mock-heroic, in which some of the joke resides in the vast difference between the subject and its figurative likeness, and the very long and ornate bridge that Wodehouse must thus build to cover this gap: "the sort of eye that can open an oyster at sixty paces." Or: "looking like a bewildered halibut." Or: "like a man who, stooping to pluck a nosegay of wild flowers on a railway line, is unexpectedly struck in the small of the back by the Cornish Express." Or: "A wooden expression had crept into his features, and his eyes had taken on the look of cautious reserve which you see in those of parrots, when offered half a banana by a stranger of whose *bona fides* they are not convinced." Or: "A strange frozen sensation had come over me, rendering the physical and mental processes below par. It was as though both limbs and bean had been placed in a refrigerator and overlooked for several days." The brilliance, here, is the mock-specificity inserted into the long, fantastical phrases: the man is struck "in the small of the back" by the Cornish Express; the parrot is offered "half a banana" and may be suspicious of the stranger's "*bona fides*"; Bertie feels as if he has been put in a fridge and not merely left there but "overlooked for several days."

Such similes, like so much of Wodehouse's writing, are exercises in doubleness: they vividly "work" as similes, but their exaggerations gesture simultaneously toward their inefficacy, toward the sense one has that all simile is basically a species of exaggeration or hypothesis and therefore at some level essentially "unsuccessful." Shakespeare does not mean to get any laughs, of course, when he likens Gloucester's blinded eye to a "vile jelly," but is the leap any less of an exaggeration, any more "successful," than Wodehouse's comic leaps? Melville likens a school of whales to an Ottoman out for a walk with his harem. Many of Henry James's exquisite similes and metaphors have a decidedly camp flavor, even when James is being deadly serious—for instance, when he calls the monkish Balzac "this Benedictine of the actual." Think what Wodehouse might have made of "this Benedictine of the actual"! Falstaff complains that Prince Hal unleashes on him "the most unsavory similes"; metaphor is always "unsavory" in this sense, is metaphysical wit at bottom (the yoking together of unlikely elements), and Wodehouse's savory similes reveal this like none other; they turn the wit of metaphor bottoms up.

III.

In the summer of 1940, Wodehouse was well on his way toward completing the third great Jeeves and Wooster novel of these years, *Joy in the Morning*, when he was interrupted. The Germans had arrived. Partly for tax reasons, he and his wife had been living for several years in Le Touquet. Typically, he seems to have been largely oblivious of the German threat. He was writing to friends as late as 1939 that nothing seemed less likely than world war. But in May, he and his wife tried to leave Le Touquet for England, and failed. The Germans rolled into town, requisitioned his cars and bicycle, and billeted themselves next door. He would later describe the experience thus:

> The first time you see a German soldier in your garden, your impulse is to jump ten feet straight up into the air, and you do so. But this feeling of embarrassment soon passes. A week later you find that you are only jumping five feet. And in the end familiarity so breeds indifference that you are able to sustain without a tremor the spectacle of men in steel helmets riding round your lawn and even the discovery that two or three of them have dropped in and are taking a bath in your bathroom.

Wodehouse being Wodehouse, he went back to work. Routine re-asserted itself until July 21, when all foreign men under sixty were rounded up and sent off to an internment camp. From Le Touquet he was transported to Liège, and finally to Tost, a grim converted lunatic asylum in Upper Silesia, "the atmosphere like Dotheboys Hall after escape of Smike," as he wrote. He would be interned until June 1941.

The next hundred pages of McCrum's book are gripping. The biographer is at his best here, scrupulous with detail, fair but firm about the foolish errors that Wodehouse would commit. In the camp, despite all the usual hardships—the cold, sickness, the meager food—Wodehouse and his fellow Englishmen maintained

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the toughly cheerful atmosphere of the boys' boarding school: "without women ... we relapse into boyhood—all our emotions are boyish," he wrote. He was allowed a typewriter and he completed a novel, *Money in the Bank*, which relates the adventures of George, sixth Viscount Uffenham, who is forced to masquerade as a butler named Cakebread. Privately, Wodehouse confided his fears to a notebook, but publicly he kept a stiff upper lip. "Am quite happy here and have thought out new novel," he wrote to his literary agent.

But the Germans were becoming aware of the celebrity of "British Civilian Prisoner no. 796." The Foreign Ministry, eager to keep the Americans out of the war, realized that releasing Wodehouse, whose incarceration was big news in both Britain and America, would do their cause no harm. And perhaps Herr Wodehouse would like to make a few radio broadcasts to the United States, to thank his readers for their support? He was allowed out and taken to Berlin. There he was quartered at the luxurious Hotel Adlon, one of the ganglions of the larger Nazi body. It was a setup, and Wodehouse fell into it—up to the thorax, as Bertie Wooster would put it. The first radio talk was called "How to be an Internee," and proceeded thus:

> There is a good deal to be said for internment. It keeps you out of the saloons and gives you time to catch up with your reading. You also get a lot of sleep. The chief drawback is that it means your being away from home a good deal.

And it continued:

> All that happened, as far as I was concerned, was that I was strolling on the lawn with my wife one morning, when she lowered her voice and said "Don't look now, but there comes the German army." And there they were, a fine body of men, rather prettily dressed in green, carrying machine guns.

These last lines would come to haunt Wodehouse.

McCrum takes at face value Wodehouse's later insistence that his only motives in broadcasting (there were five talks in all) were to thank his American readers for their letters and, in Wodehouse's own words, "to show how a little group of British people were keeping up their spirits in difficult conditions." He nicely observes that "Jeevesian in his professional life, it was his fate to be Woosterish in Berlin. His character was exceptional: unusually good-natured, remarkably lacking in cynicism and in many ways always eager to please." Malcolm Muggeridge, who would meet Wodehouse a few years later in Paris, wrote that he was "ill-fitted to live in an age of ideological conflict. He just does not react to human beings in that sort of way, and never seems to hate anyone.... Such a temperament unfits him to be a good citizen in the mid–twentieth century." Orwell largely concurred. It is also likely, in fairness, that Wodehouse knew very little of the tribulations then being meted upon the British.

Yet, as McCrum writes, in "one of the darkest months of the war, when the British were up against it, Wodehouse came across as cowardly, disloyal and selfish." Churchill never forgave him. The government, in a viciously eccentric gesture, employed a tabloid journalist to write a denunciation, which was read out on the BBC:

> I have come to tell you tonight of the story of a rich man trying to make his last and greatest sale—that of his own country. It is a somber story of honor pawned to the Nazis for the price of a soft bed in a luxury hotel. It is the record of P. G. Wodehouse ending forty years of money-making fun with the worst joke he ever made in his life.

McCrum convicts Wodehouse of nothing more than "gross stupidity," and offers as evidence of the novelist's childlike naïveté his determination, in 1943, to get a German lawyer to travel to Britain to sue the tabloid newspapers for libel. Wodehouse seemed unaware, until his German interlocutor reminded him, of the impossibility of this Woosterish fantasy.

THERE IS A CASE—A LIMITED one, certainly—to be made for the subtle subversiveness of these broadcasts. The creator of Sir Roderick Spode and the Black Shorts knew something about how to mock authority, and fascist authority. Read now, in our luxurious security, the broadcasts have a slyly mocking tinge, even a Swiftian irony: "There is a good deal to be said for internment.... You also get a lot of sleep." It is not merely "Woosterish" to laugh at the prospect of some Nazi functionary, pen in hand, okaying these deadpan barbs: who has the last laugh here? Like so much of Wodehouse's prose, the irony vaults over the language and reaches out, contractually, to the reader, who is being taught how to decode such irony, how to invert it, how to read the picture's white and somewhat fearful negative. "'Don't look now, but there comes the German army.' And there they were, a fine body of men, rather prettily dressed in green, carrying machine guns." (This is Monty Python *avant la lettre*.) This is hardly devastating satire. But surely Wodehouse knows what he is doing; knows how to belittle the invaders; knows that soldiers do not want to look "pretty." His near-autistic detachment, while morally culpable, is what gives the comedy its unreal ironical edge.

The dialectic of English comedy is exaggeration and its opposite, understatement, each horse pulling its own wheel, and the one element driving on the other. These broadcasts are good examples of such procedures. It is no accident that Waugh, whose own comedy works similarly, was one of Wodehouse's first and best defenders after the war. Waugh's own wartime letters are pure, distilled drops of exaggerated reticence:

> So No. 3 Cmdo were very anxious to be chums with Lord Glasgow so they offered to blow up an old tree stump for him and he was very grateful and he said dont spoil the plantation of young trees near it because that is the apple of my eye and they said no of course not we can blow a tree down so that it falls on a sixpence and Lord Glasgow said goodness you are clever and he asked them all to luncheon for the great explosion.

"And he said goodness you are clever"; "when she lowered her voice and said 'Don't look now, but there comes the German army.'" Both tones aim at a babyish, fairy-book comedy; and not coincidentally, Waugh's own World War II fiction is among the best he ever wrote, in which satire and seriousness find a proper alliance.

BUT IF THESE BROADCASTS DID indeed encode a mocking irony, it was too gentle for the times, and horridly contami-

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nated by its provenance. It seems that Wodehouse never grasped the quality of his sin. The moral baby who had confidently predicted just before the war that nothing seemed less likely was apparently incapable of accepting that it had indeed been fought. The language in which he conceded wrongdoing—"I made an ass of myself"—was the innocent apple sauce–argot of his books, this time turned outward to a world that had lost, for the second time in a century, its innocence. Nowhere in McCrum's biography does Wodehouse make a single reference to the genocide; but his internment camp had been located in Upper Silesia, which was not so far from Auschwitz. For Wodehouse, World War II does seem to have been an enormous game, a Dulwich rugby match against a rather thuggish, if always proper, visiting school.

The British establishment rightly punished Wodehouse; perhaps less rightly, for the rest of his life. A government report, which absolved Wodehouse of being a traitor, was deliberately never released to him, so that he was always uncertain that he could safely return to Britain. And he never did. After making his way to Paris, he sailed to America in 1947. The war had shifted the old pyramids. The kind of arcadia that Wodehouse's fiction visited and revisited was now remoter than ever, though he kept on publishing books (tellingly, none was serialized in a magazine after 1950). He and his wife lived in soft exile on Long Island. He died on the evening of February 14, 1975, sitting at his desk with his pipe and a bag of tobacco in his hands, having retired, of course, to do a spot more work.

McCrum ends his fine book with the kind of exhortation that must come naturally to a biographer who has invested years of labor in his subject. He implores us to take Wodehouse's work more seriously, to see it as all about "the quest for human connection": "Coded more tightly than an Enigma cryptogram, the theme that animates Wodehouse's work, and gives it a moral purpose, is the quest for sweetness and light in the daily transactions of humanity." But "moral purpose" is surely too much: half of his obsessed readers would wilt away if they suspected the Master of such sweaty seriousness. What makes Wodehouse "serious" in a literary sense is the singularity of his achievement; and this singularity was owed not to moral seriousness, the possession of a thousand earnest scriveners, but to the absolute absence of it. That the work can march so easily, morally speaking, on an empty stomach; that it can achieve so many traditionally literary things without ever daring the scandal of meaning; that it can be bottomless—ungrounded, unmoored by reality—but threaten no abysses whatsoever, is completely fascinating, because it seems so fatly happy with what, for most of us, would be hardship and starvation—a cosmos of eternal and relentless frivolity. ■

Stephen Kotkin
Teenage Country

THE UKRAINIANS:
UNEXPECTED NATION
By Andrew Wilson
(Yale University Press, 380 pp., $17.95)

DEAD SOULS
By Nikolai Gogol
Translated by Robert A. Maguire
(Penguin Classics, 464 pp., $12)

I.

AGES HAVE PASSED SINCE Isaac Babel's Jewish mobsters in crimson vests ran Odessa's neighborhoods in the shadow of the Black Hundreds. Nowadays, if Sergei Eisenstein's baby carriage in *Battleship Potemkin* were to tumble down the seaside steps in Odessa, now in Ukraine, it would fall into one of Eurasia's busy narco-ports. Drug trans-shipments on the Black Sea got a boost from the overthrow of Afghanistan's sometimes opium-averse Taliban. Ukraine also traffics in its own and other countries' women. These commodities have been tricked to European hotels and other market venues with the help of criminal Kosovars, whose outlaw statelet was created by the ousting of Slobodan Milosevic. Who knew that actions directed at Afghanistan and Serbia would reverberate in Ukraine? Who knew Ukraine at all? Observers of the former Soviet lands who looked up from the goings-on in Russia might have noticed, say, that police officers in Kiev's organized-crime unit went into business themselves as a criminal organization. Ukraine, as George Soros once remarked, "gives corruption a bad name."

Here as elsewhere in the haunted houses of Eastern Europe, humans metamorphosed into insects—like the cockroach in the 1930s short stories by Bruno Schulz, native son of Drohobycz. That town moved from Poland to Ukraine after the Nazis were evicted—too late for Schulz, who was shot dead on the street in 1942, probably in a Gestapo spat ("You killed my Jew, I killed yours"). In 2001, some of Schulz's murals, which had been commissioned by a Gestapo officer for his requisitioned villa, moved, too. They were taken, some say abducted, to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, in a preservation operation "arranged" with the Ukrainian mayor. Polish officials voiced dismay, staking their own claim to the writer and artist. (Schulz wrote in Polish.) But it had taken a German, a documentary film-maker, to discover the forgotten frescoes under whitewash. Inevitably, the site of the Drohobycz ghetto, now a park, sports a statue of Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian fascist-leaning nationalist guerrilla who initially saw allies in Hitler's SS and is venerated as an implacable anti-Soviet hero. "We got used to it," Schulz's narrator says of the father-turned-cockroach. "We ceased to recognize him; he merged completely with that black, uncanny tribe."

For once, though, the prediction of the national anthem—"Ukraine Is Not Yet Dead"—came true: "Luck will smile on us brother-Ukrainians." The syndicate that misgoverned the country decided to rig a presidential election in front of several thousand international observers (two-thirds of them from Poland), whom the authorities had granted permission to come. It seems, well, ill-advised. But the ruling cliques

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had already embezzled nearly the whole country in plain view. And they had not suffered a whit. Beyond the devices of stolen elections past—controlled media, rent-a-thugs, monitors-cum-ballot-box-stuffers—the gamblers had deployed expensive "political technologists" from Russia and, above all, a state-of-the-art computer system that "processed" vote counts. The problem was that their forebears, those true-believing communists, had ripped out old churches and market stalls to create roomy public spaces for the masses to parade; and in late November 2004, out came the Ukrainian people by the hundreds of thousands, determined not to accept the latest fraud. The inspirational citizens of Ukraine seized such plazas as Independence Square—formerly October Revolution Square—and, with no apologies to Christo, wrapped them in orange, the color of the opposition's campaign.

To everyone's profound surprise, Ukraine erupted in another surge of the new democratic wave, and in a place far larger than Serbia or Georgia. "People power" in Ukraine! But try discussing "people power" with the nearly one million Chinese who occupied Tiananmen Square in that heady summer of 1989 before they were violently dispersed at little political or economic cost to the Chinese leadership. True, China had not held elections to be upheld against the dictatorship. But Iran has had elections and ample brave civic activism, and its theocratic regime has only stiffened. (In the late 1970s, "people power" not only dispatched the shah but brought the theocrats to the throne.) The successful demonstrations of defiance in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine have in common not just the scale and the savvy of the protests, led by charismatic figures who had broken off from the ruling gangs. They also share the rather decisive circumstance that, at crunch time, secret police and army brass betrayed their own regimes. When demonstrators took over the streets in Ukraine, violence was not staged among them and broadcast on television, so that internal order battalions could crack heads. On the contrary, the SBU, or State Security of Ukraine, the local successor to the KGB, proclaimed its "neutrality," setting off the political equivalent of a bank run. Autocratic states that shatter, though, have a way of re-assembling faster than you can say "amnesty." Will Ukraine be different?

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II.

Possessing both an ancient culture and a thirteen-year-old country, Ukraine's forty-seven million people—perhaps thirty-seven million of them ethnic Ukrainians—are, in the apt phrase of Andrew Wilson in his tour de force of a book, an "unexpected nation." Despite having been the site of the early medieval Rus, progenitor of all eastern Slavs, Ukraine has mostly served as one of history's hallways. Varied state projects have been through the place—Byzantium, Genghis Khan's Mongols, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Rus, the Crimean Khanate, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Royal Sweden, the Ottoman Empire, the Hapsburg Empire, the Russian Empire, Wilhelmine Germany, Greater Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greater Romania, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union. Each left baggage behind. Ukraine is nowhere near as diverse as India, the world's largest democracy, but Ukraine does have multiple sides. Kiev's heart, Independence Square, is called in Ukrainian the *Maidan*, the word for "urban commons" in Tatar-Turkic. The notion that Ukraine is split in two, East and West, is, as we shall see, an artifact of electoral politics, reinforced by outside intervention. But Ukraine is sturdier than its manipulators, or we, imagine. "An unexpected nation," Wilson points out, "is still a nation—no more and no less than many others."

Lviv was founded on a hill in 1256. Its patron, Danylo of Halychyna (Galicia), one of the rulers of the ancient Rus principalities, sought to turn his Western enemies into partners against the invading Mongols of the East. But Danylo was forced to drink *koumiss*, the fermented milk of the mare, in the presence of Genghis Khan's son, thereby acknowledging the latter's overlordship. Danylo's dynasty, as Wilson narrates, lasted not much beyond his son Lev, the Lion, after whom Lviv was named. In 1349, the town was captured by troops loyal to the Polish king, who held it until 1772, when it was annexed by Austria in the first partition of Poland. During the great Austrian fin-de-siècle of Freud and Klimt and Schoenberg, the Hapsburgs gave Lviv (they called it Lemberg) an opera house, whose rooftop figure of Winged Glory was flanked by the Geniuses of Music and of Tragedy.

In 1918, Lviv became Lwów, the third-largest city in the reconstituted Polish state, which John Maynard Keynes dismissed at Versailles as "an economic impossibility whose only industry is Jew-baiting." In World War II, multi-sided ethnic cleansing accompanied Hitler's occupation, Ukrainian separatists' crusade, and Stalin's victory, when the city changed hands again, becoming Soviet Lvov. By dint of its relatively late and nasty Sovietization, post-Soviet Lviv has come to be seen as somehow more authentically Ukrainian. Never mind that the Ukrainian national awakening inspired by Romanticism arose first in Kharkiv, which opened a university in 1805, deep in eastern Ukraine; or that in Hapsburg Galicia, as Lviv's foremost historian, Yaroslav Hrytsak, has stressed, many defenders of Ukrainian speakers amid Polonophone nobles' rule were conservatives, not proponents of an ethnic Ukraine; or that in pre-1941 Lviv Jews outnumbered Ukrainian Christians two to one, and Polish Christians outnumbered both. Hadn't West Ukrainian nationalism brought down the Soviet Union? Anyway, Viktor Yushchenko, who won 51.99 to 44.20 overall in the third-round runoff on December 26, garnered almost 94 percent in Lviv province—a margin not always seen in Soviet times, when there was a single candidate.

Adjoining Renaissance-era residences serve as Lviv's historical museum, but the city is an astonishing open-air museum. The cobblestone Market Square, a vast ensemble of fine masonry unique in Ukraine, retains its Enlightenment-era fountains graced by Greco-Roman gods. Lions greet visitors on seemingly every cornice and door knocker, from the town hall (called the Rathaus) to the former Venetian consul's house. The university, founded in 1784, occupies the grand premises of the former Galician provincial legislature, built between 1877 and 1881 in Neoclassical style and painted the inevitable Maria Theresa yellow. Surviving churches, abundant by Soviet standards and mostly restored, include Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox,

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Russian Orthodox, and Uniate or Ukrainian Catholic (which marries Eastern rites with papal allegiance). Lviv's old Golden Rose synagogue is a ruin. The opera house, restored after damage during the Nazi New Order, still stands, in front of the bazaar that was built on top of the Jewish cemetery. No statue was ever erected for the scion of a local police chief, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, whose erotic tales joining pleasure and pain lent his name to a particular sexual taste. A wanderer in the town can still stumble upon a German-language manhole cover.

A worn jewel box not on the level of Prague but comparable perhaps to Cluj in Transylvania, Lviv seems scarcely "Ukrainian" at all. The street names, though, are a dead giveaway. So is Ivan Franko National University, re-christened for the Ukrainian writer who studied here and was among the finalists for the Nobel Prize in 1916. (It was won by Verner von Heidenstam, a Swedish poet.) Everything may be "national" now, but that frame breaks down at each turn. Past Franko's statue, across the street, lies the Ivan Franko National Library. Its rare and valuable books are chiefly in Latin, German, and Polish; Ukrainian-language materials are heavily communist-era, while overall Russian-language books predominate. The historical museum exhibits the polyglot city from the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries as under six centuries of foreign "occupation." Hapsburg-era portraits were thrown in a bonfire. The monuments to Polish dignitaries were cleared from the boulevards, with one exception: thanks to the communist notion that he was a "revolutionary democrat," and therefore close to Marxism, a statue of Adam Mickiewicz was spared. That fits oddly in this jumble, for the Polish national poet was born in Lithuania, in what now happens to be Belarus, and endured czarist exile in Odessa, and never set eyes on Warsaw.

However ambiguous the setting, Ukrainian nationalism in Lviv is strong, and strongly ethnic, though it is more modulated than its caricature, let alone compared with its rabid incarnation in the 1940s. Sovietism and its after-effects in Lviv are evident, too—bureaucratic strangulation, fatally inefficient factories, SUV-driving university chairmen who earn minimal salaries but "oversee" selective admissions processes and whose departments receive foreign "research" grants. For some locals, their Westernism has little to do with the rule of law or the market and is simply the obverse of their anti-Russianism.

Still, what I have felt most keenly in Lviv is the city's apartness and impoverishment. It evokes those grade-school depictions of the formation of the continents: chunks of land breaking off in each direction, leaving an island. Most of Lviv's eight hundred thousand inhabitants remain cut off not only from their city's rich past and its richer European neighbors, but even from Kiev. During the Orange Revolution, however, an estimated one hundred thousand supporters rallied in front of the neglected opera house. Many were students, Lviv's young lions and lionesses, barely cognizant of Soviet times. These youth travel often to neighboring Poland, a short car ride away, reviving some of the intercultural experience of Galicia, and taking in a messy, troubled, but real democracy. Ukraine's drama is not nationalism but governance.

III.

In Lonely Planet's huge travel guide *Russia, Ukraine, & Belarus* (a stand-alone edition for Ukraine is fortuitously due this summer), the city of Lviv claims more than twenty pages, but the town of Donetsk gets less than one. "There's not much to attract tourists," the guide informs, "unless you're interested in seeing a model Soviet city." How true. But connoisseurs of the coketown circuit—Katowice in Polish Silesia, Kemerovo in Russia's Kuznetsk Basin—know that Donetsk comes across as among the least ghastly. Urban slag heaps, in dim light and at a distance, can be mistaken for natural hills. Flooded collieries have given the city lakes. And Donetsk is the hometown of Nikita Khrushchev, the party boss of Ukraine and then the Soviet Union, who wrote that he needed stilts to rise above the muck, and of Natan Sharansky, the Soviet dissident and Israeli politician. In 2004 Donetsk was added to the "romance tours" of Ukraine, and travelers hoping to purchase companionship among the miners' and steelworkers' daughters get to reconnoiter nearby Mariupol, the Rimini for Ukraine's working class, at no extra charge. Coal still fires Ukraine's thermal power stations (Chernobyl having cast a cloud over the nuclear alternative) and metallurgical plants, which have found new customers in Asia.

Viktor Yanukovich, the Kuchma-appointed former governor of Donetsk, won almost 94 percent here—nearly the same total as Yushchenko obtained in Lviv province. With Donetsk's one million inhabitants, Yushchenko could not overcome the circumstance that his coalition encompassed the small Freedom Party (known until 2003 as the Social-Nationalist Party), whose slogans include "Ukraine from the San to the Don," that is, from deep in Polish territory to deep in Russian territory, as well as "Kikes and Muscovians [Russians] Out." Donetsk media poured out propaganda against "West Ukrainian fascists," meaning everyone in western regions, and their supposed schemes to force Ukrainianization and risk Russian energy and factory shutdowns by sealing the border, across which many people have family or work. Ukraine's biggest-budget film ever, *A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa* (2002), which received government funding when Yushchenko was prime minister, enthusiastically relates the story of the Cossack swashbuckler who sided with Sweden against Russia in the eighteenth-century Great Northern War. The film opens with Peter the Great raping a soldier. To discredit Yushchenko, the media hyped the dreamlike film's sexually explicit and anti-Russian scenes.

But an explanation for the vote must go beyond media manipulation. Donetsk street hawkers compete with monuments to absurdly brawny proletarians as reminders of the heroic effort, wastage,

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fakery, and survivalist artistry known as the planned economy. Donetsk is where Alexei Stakhanov engaged in rigged norm-busting at the coalface, forcing fellow workers into speed-ups and generating the Stalinist encomium "Stakhanovite." At the same time, the local technical university, which began life in barracks in the 1920s, grew to be Ukraine's largest institution for turning out engineers. Soviet tourist guidebooks to Donetsk proudly enumerated each of its mines and factories, down to the toy plant founded in the 1970s that was the Soviet Union's largest, its dolls and model planes amusing children throughout the second world. True, Soviet life is commonly mocked. (For example: day after day a worker leaves the state factory with a covered wheelbarrow, but the guard who lifts the cloth finds nothing inside. Exasperated, he exclaims: "I know you're stealing, but what?" "Wheelbarrows," the worker replies.) And yet the Russians who staff the mines and factories are Soviet people still, just like Donetsk's Yanukovich-voting Ukrainian majority. The Soviet era means not only famine and the Gulag, but a way of life and thought centered on industry and company-town benefits; open internal borders but suspicion of the outside world.

With its concentration of what constitutes national wealth, Eastern Ukraine as a whole has had a virtual lock on rule in Kiev. But if Ukraine is a borderland, Donetsk (no less than Lviv) is a borderland within the borderland. Situated in the Wild Field captured from Tatar horsemen in 1739, Donetsk's prefabricated concrete massif suddenly ends and the open steppe begins. Over the centuries, the lure of escape drew all kinds—outcasts and con artists, religious sectarians and fugitives. The Wild Field served as a refuge during Stalin's time, too, as the Japanese scholar Hiroaki Kuromiya shows in his original book *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s*. No matter what your background, no matter what documentation you lacked, insatiable demand for labor meant that you would be hired, and that you could re-invent yourself. The resulting political culture, Kuromiya argues, combined militant autonomy and frontier violence, anarchy and terror. Today Donetsk's crime rate is roughly double that of Lviv. Unusually for presidential candidates, but not for Donetsk toughs, Viktor Yanukovich served two jail terms (for robbery and "severe" assault), and he may get a third. It remains to be seen whether two-term president Leonid Kuchma also gets a "third" term alongside his ill-chosen successor. Kuchma might have heeded Trotsky, the Bolshevik leader and Ukrainian Jew, who advised those venturing into the Wild Field to don "a [political] gas mask."

Spartacus

Back to the Spartacus, whose plushy womb
is cozier than a European evening
—Joseph Brodsky

Spartacus, good night, your battle scene
Over the threshold and your snow white crunch
Of ice cream, good night, your candelabrum
Of polynomial in the ticket booth

Good night—how damp and grey,
Magnificent it was, last picture show
Good night forever, you're so far away
That only Giovagnoli's book is further,

With shield and sword still on its fraying cover...
O warrior, half-naked, muscular,
The victory is yours, you've made a breach
In this, in Leningrad's decaying air

By sailing like a pirate between schools
To the third bell across the lucent screen,
Where in the mist my idol Andrzej flashed
Kawalerowicz and Antonioni,

No one can buy your ticket any more
But, by its blue and validating tear,
I swear to love you always, by the booze
I downed in your dear buffet, I do swear

To cherish you. Now rain is slashing down
Where the captain would have stood, below the mast.
O forgive me, Spartacus, we never said
Good night like soldiers parting in the shade.

VLADIMIR GANDELSMAN
(translated from the Russian by Glyn Maxwell)

IV.

THE EXTREME EAST OF Soviet Donetsk and the extreme west of Ukrainophone Lviv are just that: extremes. Each of Ukraine's regions is distinct—there is honky-tonk Odessa, old Romanian-German Bukovina, Ruthenian-Hungarian-Slovak-Gypsy Transcarpathia, Cossack Zaporizhia, Russo-Tatar Crimea, increasingly Ukrainophone Kiev; but the country as a whole is shockingly unextreme. In polls over the years on the binary of Europe versus Russia, a majority of Ukrainians have generally opted for "do not care," "am not interested," "undecided," or "refuse to respond." When forced to choose, some people confounded the pollsters by checking supposedly mutually exclusive answers, such as simultaneously supporting a Slavic Union and Ukrainian independence. This is what the Ukrainian literary critic Mykola Riabchuk calls, in a phrase seconded by Wilson, the "Third Ukraine," the one that can be found to a degree inside each person. Such ambivalence has been derided as schizophrenic, but Riabchuk affirms that in light of Ukraine's savage past and variegated current makeup, it is positively normal.

Ambivalent the populace may be, but not over sovereignty. And that goes for the Russian minority, too. In much of the country, it is not easy to distinguish Ukrainians and Russians, given the prevalence of Russian-language use (perhaps half of self-identified ethnic Ukrainians speak Russian as their primary language) as well as the incidence of intermarriage (which many brides and grooms do not view as intermarriage). Since 1991, the ethnic Russian population of Ukraine has declined, from about one-fifth to about one-sixth; some have emigrated, and others, products of mixed marriages, have switched their self-identification. More importantly, as Russians who have been to Ukraine and as Ukrainian Russians who have been to Russia will tell you, each country's Russians are a different people. Those in Ukraine might better be called not Russian but Russophone. Outsiders seem to

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believe that Russophone inhabitants of Ukraine could not possibly be "nationalist"; that because Russophones mostly reject ethnic nationalism, they are supporters of Russia. But only Ukraine's communists, whether ethnic Russian or ethnic Ukrainian, advocate abolition of the country by rejoining Russia, and they draw only about 20 percent. The broad underlying patriotism in the country means that if push comes to shove and the country appears threatened, the ambivalent Third Ukraine will take sides.

A SHOVE CAME FROM VLADIMIR Putin's self-initiated campaign stops in Ukraine, and from the Russian president's summoning of President Kuchma to a Moscow airport for a televised harangue. Persistent rumors of Russian troops landing in Kiev were a regular feature of opposition gatherings. And another shove emanated from Western involvement, especially USAID, Soros, and EU democracy assistance, which frequently took the form of funding the opposition. The state media, which enjoy a near monopoly, cast this as a plot to subsume Ukraine under a sphere of influence. In Crimea, Ukraine's only region with a majority-Russian population, alongside its Tatar minority, newscasts insisted that the peninsula would be saddled with American military bases, like Central Asia. Now the people in Yalta were ready to claim betrayal.

But the ugly truth is that long before outside intervention, the playing of the ethnic and geopolitical cards has served as a winning strategy for Ukrainian politicians. A campaign of "divide and rule" brought Kuchma success in 1994 and again in 1999, when he stage-managed the electoral winnowing to get into a runoff against the communist candidate who advocated merger with Russia—that is, an end to Ukraine. The 2004 election, too, was plotted as a referendum on sovereignty, splitting the country between choices most people would prefer not to have to make: Western "subversion" or Russian "domination."

The political incitement of division, using apocalyptic scenarios, produced the mirror-image voting of the east and the west, but finally it backfired, because one factor cut across the entire country: Ukraine's sullied reputation. The revulsion went far beyond grasping oligarchs and crony capitalism. In 2000, a presidential bodyguard, Nikolai Melnychenko, surfaced in the West with secret tape recordings, since authenticated, suggesting that the state and the underworld overlapped like a Venn diagram. Ukraine had become a place where ruling circles banked crooked fortunes selling military contraband to the likes of Saddam Hussein and an honest journalist (Georgy Gongadze) turned up headless. Revulsion at the profanity of state gangsterism was well understood by Yushchenko, who kept insinuating that his dioxin poisoning occurred over dinner with the chiefs of State Security. And Yanukovich's criminal record spoke for itself. So the winning message—*Pora*, or "Enough" (literally "It's time"), as the protesters christened their movement—resonated throughout urban Ukraine, including in some major eastern enclaves such as Kharkiv. Feelings of humiliation, as history shows, often spur horrific massacres, but sometimes they can elicit civic activism, in the streets and in the corridors of power.

Eavesdropped phone conversations—an unmistakable sign of SBU expertise—turned up as evidence in Yushchenko's winning fraud petition with Ukraine's Supreme Court. Other insiders acted to thwart the swindle as well. Lyudmyla Hrebenyuk, the chief consultant to the presidential administration on information technology, fell "ill" and disappeared right after the dubious results of the original runoff voting were announced, but she submitted written testimony to the court revealing that the presidential administration had a parallel computer system, built up over the years, that received data from the country's 33,000 polling stations faster than the server of the Central Electoral Commission. "Speaking on television on 29 November [2004], the Ukrainian President stressed that the executive bodies had not in any way intervened in the election process," Hrebenyuk told Ukraine's *Zerkalo nedeli*, or *Weekly Mirror*, on December 25, 2004. "So I decided to forward my statement to the Court." She added that "I only wanted the Court to reach a well-founded decision—a decision not in favor of either of the candidates, but in favor of the law." Self-preservation, payback, and ambition, too, triggered what became an elite stampede to the protesters' tent city, which was logistically facilitated by Kiev's municipal authorities, and eventually broadcast on oligarch and state television.

V.

THEIR KHAKI TENTS AND BRAziers dismantled, Ukraine's popular forces (divided between Yellow Pora and Black Pora and factions yet uncolored) are continuing their political work, including on the Web, where they are combating scam sites that have popped up to solicit donations for the cause—an indication of the wider challenges. Reliable and affordable credit is scarcely to be had in Ukraine, while courts are for sale. Tax police are a cudgel; traffic police are freelance tax collectors. Ukraine's military is mired in destitute decay, while some of its chiefs enrich themselves through weapons sales. The SBU retains the capacity for domestic surveillance and rogue operations. Qualifying for the European club is a long way off, but a Western integration of sorts—by means of prime real estate acquisitions, bank accounts, children in boarding schools—long ago took place among well-greased individuals, the very interests that backed the "pro-Russian" candidate Yanukovich. In a tiny economy by European standards, where vital job-creating small and medium businesses are painfully few and often underground, a small knot still controls an outsize share of GDP as well as private television. Some defected to Yushchenko late. Some repaired to villas abroad to wait things out. The chairman of the Ukrainian Credit Bank and the transport minister committed suicide. The rest of state officialdom must decide whom to hold accountable for the falsification, the culprits—that is, themselves—or scapegoats. Welcome to office, President Yushchenko!

Ukrainian politics is less about reformers and anti-reformers, our preferred categories, than about failures and wily survivors. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, Leonid Kravchuk became

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independent Ukraine's first president. He somersaulted to that post by lifting the slogans of the nationalist movement. As the top communist ideologue of Soviet Ukraine, Kravchuk had been responsible for persecuting Ukrainian nationalists. Leonid Kuchma, the boss of a missile factory, served under Kravchuk as prime minister—until Kravchuk forced him out in 1993. The next year, Kuchma defeated Kravchuk for the presidency. Kuchma came to power as an economic reformer, aiming to bring Ukraine into the ranks of civilized nations. In October 1994, as Wilson reminds us, Kuchma duly launched liberalizing reforms; but these were soon chewed up in the maw of competing "clans," whose rivalrous animosities Kuchma tirelessly fostered as a method of personal control. (That's Autocracy 101.) The president also encouraged acts of corruption among officials, who were under surveillance, thereby generating evidence of misdeeds that could be used to compel loyalty or to bring people down. In sum, chocolate-slathered hookers popping out of cakes notwithstanding, the crackup had yielded an independent Soviet Ukraine, with a familiar politics of intrigue and blackmail (*kompromat*).

The first major rival to Kuchma—his own prime minister Pavlo Lazarenko, from the same Dnipropetrovsk "clan"—was politically annihilated in 1997–1998. (He was convicted of money-laundering charges in the United States.) In December 1999, Yushchenko, then the ambitious chairman of Ukraine's National Bank (his predecessor had been whacked in a contract killing), decided against trying to unseat Kuchma. But when Kuchma won re-election, he named Yushchenko the country's eighth prime minister in eight years. A second stab at economic reform ensued, this time more effective. But sixteen months later, in April 2001, Yushchenko lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence sponsored by the oligarch clans. In his departing speech before the deputies, he said: "I am going, in order to return."

How seriously Ukraine's swells took this bravado is hard to say. But Yushchenko scored a comeback with the parliamentary elections of March 2002, when his newly formed bloc, "Our Ukraine," thumped Kuchma's "party of power" coalition, winning 25 percent of the vote against the latter's 11 percent. Presidential elections loomed in 2004, and Ukraine's constitution, adopted in 1996, allowed only two presidential terms. That limit acquired urgency amid the accusations linking Kuchma's crew to arms smuggling and decapitation. The plotting began.

A SUPREME IRONY OF THE Orange Revolution is that it accomplished Kuchma's antic scramble to alter Ukraine's political system. In April 2000, Kuchma forced a plebiscite to increase the presidency's already substantial prerogatives at the expense of parliament. Not long after his referendum passed, Melnychenko's tapes surfaced, so parliament got a reprieve. The next twist came in 2003, when Ukraine's Constitutional Court ruled that Kuchma could run for a third term because he had served his two terms under different constitutions. But that scenario smacked of Belarus, and threatened Ukraine with pariah status (that is, no European visas for the elite). In early 2004, Kuchma called rewrite. Now he sought to appropriate parliamentarians' initiatives to increase their branch's powers vis-à-vis the president, bills that he had repeatedly vetoed. Taras Kuzio, the indispensable workhorse scholar of Ukrainian politics, surmised that the term-limited and exposed chief executive might re-base himself in the Rada. But needing to cajole or bribe a two-thirds majority for a constitutional overhaul, the presidential initiative to castrate itself fell short by six votes. And so the last trick in the bag appeared to be fixing the presidential elections on behalf of a handpicked successor, but the pickings were Moe, Larry, and Curly. The stooge variant hit the orange wall. Stymied, Kuchma still groped for advantage, and found it in his adversaries.

Unlike in Georgia, the opposition in Ukraine restrained itself from storming government buildings that it blockaded. Whereas the leader of the Georgian democrats took over an autocracy, a recurrent event in that country, in Ukraine a negotiated compromise institutionalized democratic power-sharing: after the parliamentary elections in 2006, the prime minister and cabinet, apart from the foreign, defense, and (perhaps) interior portfolios, will be appointed not by a super-presidency but by parliament. President Yushchenko will have his wings clipped, to Ukraine's advantage. For some, the victorious mantra is therefore hurry-up "radical reform"—as if it were a matter of presidential will. To move off the page into people's lives, decrees and laws need stakeholders, powerful vested interests that will fight for their implementation, as others struggle tooth and nail. Such a course also necessitates the maintenance of an electoral majority, no mean feat when even success will generate abundant losers.

The battleground is not geopolitics, it is institutions. We can only hope that this youthful society, nurtured by education, information technology, and proximity to Europe, a society that was able to paralyze a government and rectify an election but that owns little property, can stay organized to compel a sustained governmental transformation. Even with Ukraine's breakthrough to a pending balance of powers between executive and legislature, the country lacks a civil service and professional judiciary. How a kleptocratic police state becomes an impartial regulatory one is still the central post-Soviet conundrum. This is what makes Ukraine's quest for membership in the European Union, however distant, so important. What Kuchma set in motion out of raw self-interest the EU could help Ukraine to carry through because of the precondition of harmonizing institutions for entrance. Everything, though, can be tripped up by the usual dirty tricks and the deeply ingrained politics of clientelism and blackmail. Ultimately, Ukraine's pitfalls and possibilities originate from within, not from Europe or Moscow.

VI.

MYKOLA HOHOL (1809–1852), without a drop of Russian blood, invented the great Russian novel. In *Dead Souls*, in 1842, out now in a worthy new translation by Robert A. Maguire, Hohol immortalized provincial life in the Russian empire, while himself living in Rome. "We all came out of Hohol's overcoat," Dostoyevsky said, punning on Hohol's short story of that name conjuring a topsy-turvy world full of clerks and bereft of logic. Nabokov called Hohol's *Government Inspector* (1836), a looking-glass drama of mistaken identity, "the greatest play ever written in Russian." Only Babel dissented. "Petersburg defeated Poltava," he wrote of Hohol's native province (in a sly dig at empire's ascendancy). Hohol, whose name means "golden-eyed duck," set some of his tales in Ukraine, but he wrote in Russian,

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imparting to it various Ukrainianisms. "I myself do not know whether my soul is Ukrainian or Russian," he wrote in 1844, adding that "both natures are too richly endowed by God, and, as if by design, each of them separately contains within itself what the other lacks—a sure sign that they complement each other." Mykola Hohol is better known, of course, in Russian pronunciation, as Nikolai Gogol.

The intimacy between Ukraine and Russia has for too long obscured the former. I do not have in mind the "Russian" mafia in Budapest, the "Russian" girls at Tokyo hostess bars, or the "Russian" Jews of Brighton Beach and Israel's coastal town Netanya, many of whom are from Ukraine. Nor do I mean the farmers in Canada who, having fled from some of the world's best black soil, started from scratch and exported millions of tons of wheat back to Brezhnev's Soviet Union. Russians bristle at the inclusion of Vasily Kandinsky as a German Expressionist, as well they might: the artist grew up in Odessa. Kazimir Malevich, the originator of the Russian avant-garde, was born and raised in Kiev, and in the 1920s he rediscovered the city of his birth. Mikhail Bulgakov was born and raised in Kiev, too. Anton Chekhov grew up near the Sea of Azov on the southern steppes. Sergei Prokofiev came from Donetsk. If you were limited to figures born in Ukraine and Ukrainians, you could write a pretty substantial history of "Russian" culture.

Empire offered Ukrainian-born artists, film-makers, novelists, and playwrights what was made available to their counterparts in tiny Latvia or Azerbaijan, Moldova or Kyrgyzstan, as well as the Russian intelligentsia: deportation to camps in the permafrost or a bullet in the head. But to many of them Russia and then the Soviet Union opened a continent-wide cultural mixing, and an imperial audience covering one-sixth of the earth. Gogol took supreme advantage of this historical circumstance to draw the wittiest of unsentimental portraits. Others resisted. Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861), born into serfdom, attended St. Petersburg's Imperial Academy of Arts, but he composed verse in Ukrainian, demonstrating its worthiness as a literary language to the naysayers in the imperial capital, where he developed his ardent Ukrainian consciousness. He mourned Ukraine's absorption by Poland and Russia, but he caught an eyeful witnessing the 1830 Polish revolt against the Russian empire. Shevchenko's *The Dream* parodied Pushkin's Russian epic *The Bronze Horseman*, daring to denounce Peter the Great as a "perfidious serpent." Internal exile followed. But Shevchenko became the Ukrainian national poet, a status that even Soviet censors recognized.

A separate Ukrainian identity, Wilson notes, had in fact been secured through attempts at religious unity. In the late sixteenth century, Orthodox churchmen in Ukrainian lands initiated a move to reunite Eastern and Western Christianity, but they ended up establishing a third church, the Uniate, which recognized the authority of the pope while preserving Eastern rites. Uniates were distinct from their Austrian Catholic and Polish Catholic rulers. In parallel, the metropolitan of Kiev, Petro Mohyla, a Moldovan who had studied in Paris, founded an Orthodox Collegium modeled on the Jesuits, using Latin and Polish culture to leaven Orthodoxy. Mohyla, too, aimed at a synthesis of East and West, but his brief experiment ended up distinguishing Ukrainian from Russian Orthodoxy. After Russia absorbed much of the Ukrainian-speaking lands in 1654, Mohyla's Collegium, which became the Kiev Academy, transmitted civic humanism, secular book printing, and Western elements in music, painting, and architecture. The Kiev Academy served as a window to the West before Peter the Great and after. Such a role could be no less valuable now. "Ukraine," President Kuchma said back on November 11, 1999, "should remain an independent country and God help Russia resolve its own problems." God, and maybe Ukraine.

Neither a quarantine of Ukraine's example nor some new eastern boundary is possible in any case. As Ukraine contemplates the deeper revolution required to integrate with Europe, it is already economically integrated with Russia. Kiev hauls in an estimated $1.5 billion in transit fees on pipelines that carry Russian fossil fuels westward. Russia is also an essential supplier of many Ukrainian industries, an employer of millions of Ukrainian guest workers, and the biggest market for Ukrainian goods. Sure, many wish that history had been different—Wilson makes instructive use of what-ifs. Not least among the regretful are Ukraine's Jews, down from more than three million before 1939 to half a million in 1989, and now just over one hundred thousand, according to the admittedly disputed 2001 census. There is a blind spot about the Holocaust in Ukraine, which if raised tends to elicit a fixation on minor factual errors in demonstrations of complicity and refrains that "we suffered too," and that some Ukrainians helped Jews. And very striking in its own way is the construal of seventy-odd years of communism as something that happened to Ukraine, victimizing it without its participation.

The bright spot is relations with Poland, Ukraine's other intimate partner and the other half of Gogol's mixed gentry ancestry. Polish rule's mistreatment of Ukrainians—repaid in kind whenever possible—frequently outdid Russia's; but today Poland is Ukraine's closest ally. What Ukrainian society—like its guiding Polish star—can draw upon is popular memory of the struggle against imperialism. When the Soviet Union still existed, Boris Yeltsin led a Russian revivalist upsurge against Moscow, but this destroyed the Union, and national self-assertion in Russia again assumed the form of anti-Westernism. Russia's particular richness derives from its blend of influences from the east, south, and north, too. But Russia's anti-Westernism is self-defeating, bound up with a reflex to envision greatness in empire, now merely the phantom twitch of a severed limb. ■

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Career Fair

In my house, there is no debate about which gender is better at math and science. Clearly the women are. I have an undergraduate degree in government and emotional scars from my high school calculus course. My wife has a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics, a doctorate in operations research, and a tenure-track job at one of the nation's top universities. I would like to think that crafting the sentences you are now reading takes some intelligence. But don't expect me to solve discrete optimization problems using binary variables that involve multiple simultaneous decisions. That is what my wife does in her work. Or so people tell me.

On the other hand, I hope that I'm an above-average father. With the help of an understanding employer, I've modified my professional life to spend more time with my two kids—working mostly from home, reducing my hours, and moving from a steady stream of deadline-oriented work to projects that allow me more control over my schedule. I've passed up some financial and professional opportunities, but I was also on hand to see my boys wobble through their first steps and drool through their first cookies. No regrets here. Besides, women have been adjusting their work lives to their family's needs for decades, just as my wife still does today. I guess you could say I'm just catching up.

But perhaps there's more catching up to do. On the whole, women are still far more likely than men to subordinate their careers to family life, either by taking time away from their jobs or by shifting into less demanding work. Fast-forward ten or 20 years, and most of these women have not gone as far as men who began their careers at similar times—if, indeed, these women are still in the workforce at all. This phenomenon, more than overt discrimination or intelligence disparities, is likely the main reason why women's pay and stature lag in some high-powered professions. Thus the dilemma that Harvard President Lawrence Summers raised, albeit clumsily, a few weeks ago: Should society try to mitigate this effect?

You don't have to be a Neanderthal to think that something about having two X chromosomes may naturally predispose women toward taking care of family. If humans indeed have that sort of genetic hard-wiring, then even a truly nondiscriminatory workplace would still have more men than women. But it's hard to know where genetics stop and social expectations begin. Are men who choose work over family simply following chromosomal orders? Or are they taking advantage of cultural standards that allow them to shirk parenting responsibilities? Nor is it even clear that biology *should* be destiny. After all, it is one thing to accept the idea of women, as a group, preferring a different work-family balance than men. It is quite another thing to force women, as individuals, to face harsher trade-offs in life simply because of biology. And that is precisely what happens—as the economist Brad DeLong recently observed—in jobs that are "structured as a tournament, in which the big prizes go to those willing to work the hardest and the smartest from their mid-twenties to their late thirties." For the most part, a man in this tournament can delay parenting until his forties or seek a wife who will do the parenting largely on her own. But a woman who postpones childbearing past her late thirties risks a troubled pregnancy or none at all. And, while she's welcome to seek a Mr. Mom, she's unlikely to find one.

Public policy can go a fair way toward making the choices facing working women less stark by expanding child care and offering paid family leave, just as most of Europe does. Large employers can also take action on their own, granting workers flexibility without ending opportunities for advancement. Such reforms have not just a moral logic, but a practical one, too, given the talent squandered when you marginalize half the population. Among other things, it's not as if a woman who works fewer hours in her thirties cannot contribute more substantially to her field in her forties and beyond. As another well-respected economist explained a few years ago, "Helping parents with child care is not only good for families, it is also good for the economy, because it helps all to participate in the workforce to the full extent of their abilities and wishes."

The economist who said that was none other than Lawrence Summers, back when he was serving in the Clinton administration. This shouldn't be surprising. Liberals have always been the ones championing such ideas, because so many conservatives have qualms with women working outside the home, government regulating the workplace, or both. But liberals have also been known to talk about work-family issues too exclusively in these terms, as if the proper combination of subsidies, regulations, and affirmative action will magically produce gender parity at work. There are bound to be some jobs where flexibility and success really are at odds. A physician determined to manage a Little League team might not be available when critically ill patients need emergency surgery; a scientist who can't commit to more than 35 hours a week might fall hopelessly behind in a field where the pace of discovery is too fast.

Determined families with sufficient financial resources can usually find ways to make child care fit even these demanding work schedules. But, just because you can schedule kids around your work doesn't mean you always should. Here, it seems, the right sometimes makes more sense than the left, since conservatives are far more willing to admit that outsourcing child care can have downsides. So, rather than trying to eliminate the career compromises that come with a family, which will never happen completely, an enlightened society should also try to make sure that men do more of the compromising. And, while public policy or employer attitudes can encourage such behavior, ultimately the most effective pressure to change will come not from politics but from culture, via messages carried by the media, role models, friends, and family. It would be nice to think that more men would reach this conclusion on their own. But, let's face it: Many of us just aren't that bright.

JONATHAN COHN

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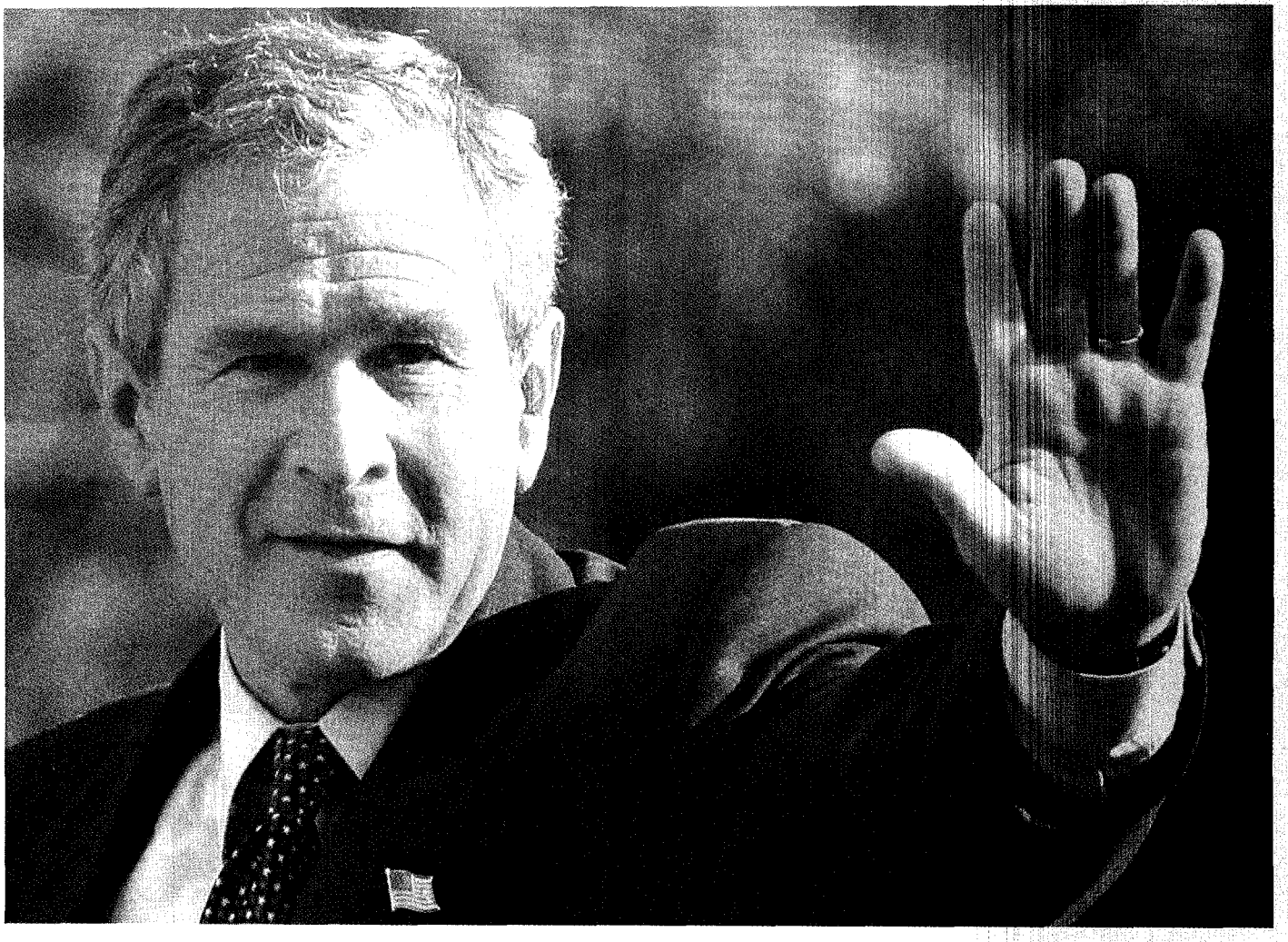

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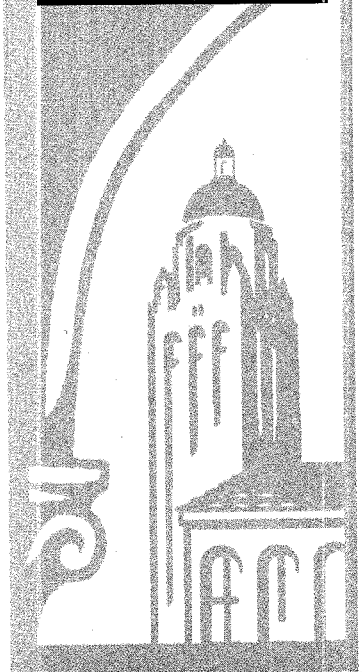

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The 2004 election's map of blue coasts and red hinterland proclaims two distinct Americas. But this gives a false impression of unity within the contending camps.

Disagreement among conservatives in the United States is acute about which beliefs, practices, and institutions are essential and which are most in danger of being lost or degraded. Social conservatives are anxious to constrain America's larger liberalism by protecting traditional morality from the corrosive effects of untrammeled personal freedom and the disruptions of a healthy, churning economy. In contrast, libertarians seek to preserve the legal framework within which personal freedom can be enjoyed and the market can operate most efficiently. Neoconservatives—typically more at home with liberalism than social conservatives and more at ease with traditional morality than libertarians—are committed to protecting America's liberalism from its own excesses by preserving habits of heart and mind that support freedom.

To command a national majority, the Republican Party requires the support of all three kinds of conservatives. But the fault lines in the coalition run deep. Social conservatives view abortion as an evil and oppose same-sex marriage as a threat to an institution they regard as central to civilized life. Libertarians, at least early in pregnancy, would leave the decision of whether to terminate a pregnancy to the mother and prefer government to stay out of the marriage business. Neoconservatives support an ambitious and idealistic foreign policy, with its hallmark the promotion of democracy abroad. Social conservatives, worried about the reach of liberalism at home, are skeptical both about liberalism's appeal abroad and about the United States' interest in promoting it. Furthermore, libertarians oppose the growth of government spending—even as social conservatives want to increase spending on domestic programs to shore up traditional values and neoconservatives want to increase spending on military and foreign aid.

Serious fault lines also run beneath the progressive camp. United by the priority they give to making America a more equal and inclusive society, progressives divide over the role that government, market mechanisms, courts, and the institutions of civil society should play in achieving it. Perhaps the most ominous tension within the progressive coalition arises from the conflicting economic interests of the party's two main constituencies. Once the party of the working class, today's Democratic Party is increasingly divided between highly educated, upper-middle-class professionals, who identify with its secular social and cultural outlook, and the poor, the sick, and the elderly, who want the party to increase government assistance.

Both parties face formidable challenges in keeping their vulnerable coalitions together while reaching out to centrists to assemble a national majority. The spectacle is enough to inspire in an old-fashioned liberal—one who follows John Stuart Mill in believing that liberty depends on a robust contest between a party that makes conserving a priority and a party that makes progress a priority—pride in American democracy and hope for the future.

—Peter Berkowitz

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